ADRIFT AT HOME: NATIONAL BELONGING AND NARRATIVE FORM IN THE ROOMS OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRITISH FICTION

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines representations of interior space in twentieth-century British and Irish texts, where the question of "home" has an urgency that is particular to a century in which personal and national spaces underwent extraordinary transformation. I examine national change at the level of the interior room, where characters expressly or tacitly pursue a stable home, even as the rooms that constitute their houses are increasingly drafty, mobile, and unsettled. In novels by Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Bowen, J.G. Farrell, Jean Rhys, Sam Selvon, Doris Lessing, and W.G. Sebald, I analyze how representations of destabilized interior spaces are mobilized on behalf of larger arguments about imperial politics in which the relatively stable framework of national identity in the nineteenth century gives way to a more dispersed and disrupted sense of Englishness in the twentieth century. The novels I read stage a conflict between the house as a secure space of the nation or national symbolic, and the house as a space unsettled by colonial encounters, war, and immigration. Political upheaval is not merely experienced in but enacted through domestic space, where the room becomes a site of national conflict and occasionally the source of military, imperial, or political power. Through their representation of unsettled interiors, these novels critique "territorial nationalism" as a key geographical construct that delineates subjectivity. In these novels, the "home" is disoriented in both its material forms (the house) and metaphorical forms (citizenship and national affiliation).

In the twentieth century, changes to interior life give rise to changes in literary form. The representation of rooms as bounded but continually changing spaces works as a critique of realist form, which presupposes more stable versions of subjectivity and more stable narrative forms. These novels offer an alterative model that privileges fluidity, instability, and unsettledness. The room offers a distinctive metaphorical territory for novelists because as an enclosed but fluid

space, it can simultaneously work as a metaphor for England's unsettled national interior space, for the space of the novel, and for the interior space of the mind. Space was once considered the sphere of fixity and solidity, in contrast to time, which was conceived as boundless and unstable; in the last few decades, human geography has countered these assumptions to show that space is also a sphere of heterogeneity. The novels I read both anticipate and critique human geography by representing interior spaces as at once stable and shifting. That is, rather than present interior spaces as endlessly in flux, they show interior space as a site of tension between the desire for solidity and the reality of continuous change. These fictional rooms work to expose how spaces that are assumed to be coherent, closed, and safe are unstable, open, shifting. The breakdown of the solidity of the room is enacted through the breakdown of the stability of the realist narrative. Disorienting narrative spaces perform the disoriented space of the home; these "disorienting" formal choices take shape through shifting narrative points of view, grammatical evasiveness, digressive sentence or chapter structures, and interruptions or revisions to genre.

Interior spaces are continuous with a changing social world and offer new ways of understanding how this social world is destabilized by imperial and late imperial political conditions and war in Britain, especially in relation to interior consciousness. I argue that rooms are a mechanism for demonstrating disruption and disorientation in characters' social worlds and their subjectivity. As a metaphor, the room exposes the interrelation between disruptions to material life and to psychological life; interior space is at once a more compelling and more unstable metaphor for national and individual identity. Whereas the home was once seen as a site of seclusion, safety, or escape, these novels demonstrate that the relative stability of national interiors and local interiors give way, making everyone an exile, even at home.

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INTRODUCTION: OUTSIDERS WRITING INTERIORS

> I would like there to exist places that are stable, unmoving, intangible, untouched and almost untouchable, unchanging, deep-rooted; places that might be points of reference, of departure, of origin: My birthplace, the cradle of my family, the house where I may have been born […] Such places don't exist, and it's because they don't exist that space becomes a question, ceases to be self-evident, ceases to be incorporated, ceases to be appropriated. Space is a doubt: I have constantly to mark it, to designate it."
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> Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces* (91)

Historical upheaval in the twentieth century shook the physical and figurative foundations of home in Europe. In a century where two world wars demolished countless buildings, the growth and decline of empire remapped territories across the globe, and immigration radically transformed the populations of major European cities, both the place and the idea of "home" became increasingly indefinite, insecure, and unlocatable. Georges Perec, the son of Polish Jews who were forced into exile during World War II, describes losing both the site of home (the "house where I may have been born") and the sense of home (a point of "reference, of departure, of origin").[1] For Perec, the desire for a "stable, unmoving" place to call home is offset by his recognition that "such places don't exist," especially for an orphan raised by distant family members in a country where he never felt at home (91).[2] Perec's 1974 collection of essays, *Species of Spaces*, is a melancholy catalog of spaces he occupies but never feels at home in, from the page to the bedroom to the apartment.[3] In his essays, his longing for spatial stability

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[1] Perec, a prolific and light-hearted writer, was best known for *La Disparition* (in English, *A Void*), a novel he wrote without the most commonly-used letter in both French and English--the letter "e." Born in Paris in 1936, Perec was forced to uproot and move when Paris was occupied, and both his parents died in the war (his father in the Foreign Legion, his mother in Auschwitz). *Species of Spaces* is a heart-breaking, if understated, response to the loss of his parents and the loss of his material and metaphorical "home."

[2] Throughout his life, Perec felt both assimilated in and alienated from France, where he was born. In an essay about his Jewish heritage, Perec heartbreakingly writes, "I was born in France, I am French, I bear a French first name, Georges, and a French surname, or almost, Perec" (136). His "almost" reveals what John Sturrock calls "the tell-tale mark of his difference": Perec was Jewish in France, but "steeped in Gentile culture" to his Jewish relatives ("Introduction" xiv). Perec himself lamented the "insistent, insidious, unavoidable feeling of being somewhere alien in relation to some part of myself, of being 'different'" (137).

[3] His obsessive categorization of space, from the most local to the most global, approximates Stephen Dedalus's list in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

at home takes shape through his obsessive classification of different spaces ("A bedroom is a room in which there is a bed; a dining-room is a room in which there are a table and chairs…" [27]) and his series of questions for which he has no answers ("What does it mean, to live in a room? Is to live in a place to take possession of it?" [24]). Perec laments that he has no homeland, and this loss is entangled with his description of his home spaces, which are as uncertain as his national allegiances.

This project explores the paradox that Perec articulates in *Species of Spaces*: the longing for stability at home and the impossibility of finding it. *Species of Spaces* reveals how the concept of "home," both as a material place and an ideological one, is conflicted territory for the orphaned, the exiled, and the outsider.[4] For Perec, who never felt quite at home in France and who mourned the absence of a childhood home acutely, writing about space was an attempt to keep it stable, to "mark" and "designate" it, to "try meticulously to retain something…to wrest a few precise scraps from the void" (92). In Perec's orientation toward home, I read the symptoms of a larger rupture in the twentieth century, where "home" is destabilized by enormous historical, technological, and social change. This project examines representations of interior space in twentieth-century British and Irish texts, where the question of "home" has an urgency that is particular to a century in which personal and national spaces underwent extraordinary transformation.[5] I examine national change at the level of the interior room, where characters expressly or tacitly pursue a stable home, even as the rooms that constitute their houses are increasingly drafty, mobile, and unsettled.

The room offers a method of understanding interior spaces, particularly the interior space of the "home," as both a metaphorical construct and an ideological configuration in twentieth-

[4] But also, as I will show, for those who do not immediately categorize themselves as outsiders.
[5] I treat the designation of "British and Irish" widely, including two Anglo-Irish writers, two West Indian writers, a German expatriate, and a South African British writer.

century novels. The etymology of the word room helps to illustrate why rooms occupy a distinctive territory for understanding the paradox of home in the twentieth century. Originating from the German *raum* meaning "space" or "spaciousness" (its root *reue* "to open; space"), the term "room" signals both enclosure and openness. This is useful when we think of how rooms both constitute and undermine stability in the home. On the one hand, they are enclosed spaces in which individuals generally experience home as a solid or safe place. On the other hand, rooms are not invulnerable to change, on both small and large scales—objects and inhabitants move in and out, spaces deteriorate or are destroyed, or rooms are renovated. In their openness to the outside world, rooms have spaciousness that can be destabilizing for how their occupants experience home, on both the local and global level. In the texts I examine, "home" is expressed through rooms and through subjects in rooms.[6] The desire for stability at home is an ideological configuration often expressed through the representation of rooms as the units that make up a house, an apartment, or a living space. Unstable rooms undermine the metaphorical connection between home and territory. When characters are displaced, exiled, or orphaned, they experience this metaphorical displacement through their physical homes. Rooms have a double relationship to home: they are necessary for describing the metaphorical relationship between home and nation even as they are used to critique the perceived stability of this connection. Through the room, the novel describes the home disoriented in both its material and metaphorical forms. On the material level, houses are subject to violence, dilapidation or disorder; on the metaphorical

[6] See also Nancy Armstrong for an explication of how the conventionally female domestic sphere bears a relation to the nation. On the question of "subjects in rooms," there are some novels where the absence or removal of subjects is also distinctive of the changes to "home," such as in novels like *Jacob's Room* and *To The Lighthouse*, where the absence of subjects in a room stands in for the effects of war on a home. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf also explores how women experience Englishness and their relationship to nationalism through their private spaces (or lack thereof).

level, citizenship and national affiliation undergo seismic shifts because of war, empire and their aftermath.

In the following chapters, I argue that these "destabilized" rooms are mobilized on behalf of larger arguments about imperial politics and national belonging in the context of the accelerated disruption of "Englishness" and national space in the twentieth century. Twentieth-century fiction is full of messy or dilapidated rooms that indicate change at home. The wallpaper peels, the curtains blow, the furniture disintegrates; servants are needed less urgently, attics are renovated, downstairs tenants move out and recent immigrants move in; war brings change as nighttime bombing raids threaten to topple houses completely; technological advancement like electric lights, running water, telephones, and transport transform the experience of being at home, making interior spaces both bigger and smaller. From the unfamiliar furnishings in the sitting room of Leonard Bast's semi-basement apartment to the Blooms' disorderly bedroom to the redecoration and disintegration at Brideshead in *Brideshead Revisited*, fictional rooms often express other kinds of national change, from suburban development to anticolonial sentiment to the deterioration of certain national ideals. Characters like Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* use their "dwellingplace" as a way to understand their position in the larger world.[7] Home—as a physical location, a national ideology, or a sense of belonging—is transformed in twentieth-century fiction.

As both a place and an idea, home has a rich background in literary studies and critical theory. Though he has fallen out of critical favor, Gaston Bachelard's often-whimsical readings

[7] In *Portrait*, Stephen tries to fix his location—and thus his sense of belonging—through the relationship between the room he sits in and the larger universe: "He turned to the flyleaf of the geography and read what he had written there: himself, his name and where he was. Stephen Dedalus/ Class of Elements/ Clongowes Wood College/ Sallins/ County/ Kildare/ Ireland/ Europe/ The World/ The Universe. That was in his writing: and Fleming one night for a cod had written on the opposite page: Stephen Dedalus is my name,/ Ireland is my nation./ Clongowes is my dwellingplace/ And heaven my expectation" (15-16).

of interior space have influenced the field of studies on home. In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard describes the home as an imagined space built out of an individual's relationship with his or her childhood home. Bachelard's formulation, of course, assumes that an individual has a childhood home to begin with—an idea challenged by many of the texts this dissertation examines, in particular by W.G. Sebald's writing about exile.[8] More recent postcolonial theorists have also challenged the ideological and psychological conceptions of home proffered by Bachelard and others. In its conceptions of displacement, migration, dislocation, postcolonial and cultural theory has explored how the nation-state is constructed through the category of "home."[9] Feminist theory has a fertile relationship with the history of home, and has worked to disentangle the home from the sphere of the feminine by examining how gender politics and power dynamics are navigated through the material space of the house.[10] Black feminist theory has also, as Wendy Webster argues, applied the "multiple meanings of home to black women in the contexts of slavery, colonialism, and migration."[11] Despite the wealth of critical studies on the home, popular cultural representations of the home continue to depict it as a haven of femininity, hominess, and security.[12] What are we to make of these multiple (and sometimes conflicting) understandings of "home"? Clearly, the home is not an undisputed site of security or domesticity, though it is often

[8] In his insistence on the childhood home as the root of all later conceptions of home, Bachelard both neglects and inadvertently draws attention to the unsettled and complicated relationship that immigrants, exiles, and outsiders have with the material and metaphorical spaces of "home."

[9] See Homi Bhabha's *Nation and Narration*, among others.

[10] See, for instance, Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology*.

[11] Webster, *Introduction*, x. Webster cites bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins as examples.

[12] See feminist criticism, see especially work like Gerry Smyth's and Jo Croft's *Our House: The Representation of Domestic Space in Modern Culture*, or Anna Snaith's *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations.* Both works attempt to resist the idea that the house is a gendered, private, womanly haven away from the pressures of work. For popular work, see for instance the so-called "New Domesticity," a return to homemaking that is pitched almost exclusively toward women in books like Emily Matchar's *Homeward Bound: Why Women are Embracing the New Domesticity*, which features a cover image of a woman knitting happily in the kitchen. See also Shannon Hayes' *Radical Homemakers: Reclaiming Domesticity From A Consumer Culture*. *Radical Domesticity* responds to any number of popular forums about women and their relationship to work in the home, including Rachel Wilkerson's "Feminism And The "New Domesticity." The popular habit of viewing the home as the sphere of the feminine is at times implicit in literary studies in which the home is a secondary or invisible object of analysis, especially amongst studies of space.

a site of longing or of unfulfilled desire for stability. And though political and historical conflict is enacted in the home, it is not entirely a political zone. The meaning of the term "home" is deeply contextual, and in each chapter, I explore how different forms of power are contested and consolidated through interior spaces. For each text I read, home has a different valence, especially in its relationship to political, national, and social belonging.

The concept of home as both a physical location and an idea guides my reading of homes throughout this dissertation. Home is a unique concept, K.H. Adler explains, for its ability to "combine in one word the place where one lives and the sense of being in it."[13] While "home" defines a material space—the house a character returns to at night, the site of one's childhood home, a geographical location—it also evokes what Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling call "a set of feelings/cultural meanings."[14] This "set of cultural meanings" varies among the texts I read. In some texts, "home" evokes England's imperial network; in others, "home" signals the search for citizenship; in others, "home" is an imagined emotional and national territory where one might find belonging. I am interested in home as both a material and ideological space, but I also explore the interplay between material houses and their symbolic meaning.[15] I explore how architecture, territory, and narrative form are mutually constituted through the interior rooms of real and representative homes. That is, the vagaries of textual space are staked in the interchange between actual spaces (rooms, hotels, boarding houses, and the Anglo-Irish Big House) and the ideological spaces of home (belonging, citizenship, national identity, and security).

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[13] Adler, "Introduction: Gendering Histories of Homes and Homecomings," 3. Adler also contends that the term home in other languages, including German, has a more ideological aspect than it does in English, where the dominant meaning is physical.

[14] Blunt, Alison and Robyn Dowling. *Home*, 2-3.

[15] This is a dynamic explored, for instance, in relation to New York City in architect James Sanders' book *Celluloid Skyline: New York and the Movies* and subsequent exhibition of the same name. *Celluloid Skyline* examines the endless feedback between the physical city and the representational city depicted on film (what Blunt and Dowling might call the set of "cultural meanings"). Sanders argues that the New York depicted on TV and film feeds individuals' experience of the real city.

On an architectural level, the twentieth century was a period of intense transformation for the home in England and Ireland. At the end of the nineteenth century, over a million people in Britain worked in service and lived in their employers' houses; by the end of the twentieth century, technological advances like running water, electricity, washing machines, and dishwashers and had greatly reduced the need for live-in help. Gender relations shifted significantly between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both shaping and responding to architectural advances.[16] Women had more independence financially and socially; they were able to live alone, to take walks unescorted, and to pursue careers outside the home. In the beginning of the twentieth century, prevailing gender and class structures, which had been embedded in "separate spheres" of the Victorian home, also began to shift. In her essay "Hyde Park Gate," which describes her childhood home at the end of the nineteenth century, Virginia Woolf notes the importance of the folding doors that separated men's and women's spaces as well as the spaces of servants and family. Woolf asks, "How could family life have been carried on without them?" And yet, by 1904, not only does Woolf carry on without the folding doors, she lives happily with her unmarried sister and younger brother—and without male guardianship at all for several years. Along with technological and social change, war transformed both material homes and figurative "hominess" in Britain. Women experienced the war primarily through the home, via shortages, absences, and displacement. To give one example, Elizabeth Bowen's 1948 novel, *The Heat of the Day*, describes the disorienting world of London during the Blitz in the apartments of two women, Stella Rodney and Louie Lewis. Both women live alone in rented rooms, with their belongings and furniture in storage. In Stella's rooms, she trips over the unfamiliar furniture when she enters in darkness each night to pull the black-out blinds. The text

[16] As Rosner argues, "Domestic architecture is […] key to understanding the history of gender and sexuality in the early twentieth century." (14).

repeatedly describes Stella's disorientation and fear within her apartment, but rarely does it mention that London itself has become as unfamiliar and hazardous as an unfamiliar room in the dark. Instead, Stella's experience of the Blitz is written through her rented rooms, which express by proxy her larger sense of confusion about English space. The post-war novels I read in Chapter 3, as well as Sebald's mournful quasi-novel *Austerlitz*, describe England's disorienting cityscapes, where blocks of housing are interspersed with blocks of rubble. In several of these texts, geographic absences are reminders of other kinds of absences—of family members, friends, or homelands in post-war Britain. The destruction of England's cityscapes was coincident with an influx of immigrants in the postwar period, a combination that strained the housing market. The postwar housing crisis is an issue rarely discussed in the literary criticism, in spite of post-war historians who define housing as a "crucial political issue" of the period and those who describe the home as the single most important symbol of post-war life.[17] As we will see in chapter three, the housing crisis shaped legal and social formulations of Englishness after the war.

On a territorial level, the nation-as-home was transformed by immigration policies, globalization, and two world wars that redrew the map of Europe. New and reconstructed geographies and policies likewise altered the boundaries of citizenship. Like Perec, the authors I examine struggle with their national identities, and all claim to be exiles to varying degrees. Virginia Woolf claimed that being a woman made her an "outsider," famously declaring, "As a woman, I have no country."[18] Elizabeth Bowen and J.G Farrell were both Anglo-Irish and struggled with feeling neither Irish enough for the Irish, nor English enough for the English. Sam Selvon, Doris Lessing, and Jean Rhys immigrated to England in the middle of the century

[17] Langhamer 343, Obelkevich 144.
[18] *Three Guineas*, 109.

from British territories (Selvon from Trinidad, Lessing from South Africa, and Rhys from Dominica). As colonial subjects, Selvon, Lessing, and Rhys all occupied conflicted spaces in relation to their national identities. Under imperial rule, they were both claimed as British subjects and yet excluded from belonging in England. W.G. Sebald was a German expatriate who spent much of his life in England and yet renounced belonging to either place. Throughout his life and work, Sebald sympathized with outcasts and displaced people.[19] Although I do not read all their texts biographically, these authors shared a fascination with home as both a space and an ideal. Their novels take up their creators' conflicted relationships with Englishness.

In each chapter, I draw parallels between the spaces that characters occupy and the space of the text. That is, along with exploring the space of home through house and nation, I also explore the space of the novel. In other words, I see the novel as a type of house in its own right, in which chapters act like interconnected rooms under the "roof" of a cover and readers move from chapter to chapter as they might move from room to room. In the space of each novel, I observe parallels to homes that the texts describe. Returning to *The Heat of the Day* as a case study for this analytical approach, I argue that Stella's experience of her rented room replicates the reader's experience of Bowen's prose. Stella is often in confused darkness in her rented room, with its unfamiliar and sometimes hostile belongings; the reader, too, is confused, struggling to determine which of Stella's lovers is a spy.[20] In this sense, the space of the novel replicates the space of Stella's rented rooms by keeping the reader "in the dark." The text is

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[19] *Emergence of Memory*, Arthur Lubow.

[20] Susan Osborn describes an early critic, Jocelyn Brooke's *Elizabeth Bowen* (1952), on the misleading aspects of Bowen's prose: Brooke is "distressed by the apparently unassociated, confusing, and exaggerated effects that he finds in her work including her 'occasional use of the supernatural' (19), her 'tendency to " thicken " her stylistic effects' (18), the 'distorted fragmentary effect' apparent in some of her work (25), and her 'highly wrought'(12), 'idiosyncratic' (18), and 'convoluted style' (26), which he ultimately likens to a 'neurotic impediment, a kind of stammer; [that] occasionally . . . lead[s] to actual obscurity' (26)." Other, more informal reader responses to the "confusing" aspects of Bowen's prose are apparent in both the classroom and online forums, where readers remark on the difficulty and confusion of reading Bowen.

interrupted by jarring moments of violence, like blocks destroyed during the Blitz, that call attention to the historical context. If the space of the novel can be compared to the space of Stella's apartment, then it is a space in which both readers and Stella are perpetually bumping into furniture as they try to find their way toward the light. This kind of reading, admittedly unusual, takes one of Bachelard's famous interpretations of space in reverse. Bachelard has insisted that we can "write a room," "read a room," and "read a house" (14). I argue that not only is the house a text, but the text is a kind of house in which the space *of* the text performs the space *in* the text.

I engage with a field of criticism that applies the insights of geography to literary criticism in order to read literary texts spatially, what Franco Moretti has broadly termed "literary geography."[21] For the most part, I examine specific rooms in specific historical contexts—the Big House during the Anglo-Irish War of Independence, the boarding house room during the period of postwar immigration in London—but my use of the term "space" in general refers to the point at which actual spaces and symbolic/relational spaces intersect.[22] The novels I study anticipate (or in Sebald's case, intersect with) the field of human geography because they represent space as fluid and dynamic, rather than static, closed, or fixed. In the past few years, the concept of space has received increased critical attention in literary studies.[23] Human

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[21] Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel*, 3.

[22] Henri Lefebvre's has called this "representational space," which describes the imagined/theoretical space shaped by the relationship between "space in practice" and "representations of space" (maps, plans, models). David Harvey has called this "relational space" (273).

[23] See Victoria Rosner, Charles Rice, Andrew Thacker, David James, Ian Baucom, Morgan Shiach, Vera Kreilkamp, Anna Snaith, Russell West-Pavlov, and others. Imperial history and postcolonial studies have used spatial vocabularies as a way to counter progressivist histories of development. Critics grappling with questions about literary periodization have turned to spatial theories as a way to imagine alternative structures for organizing literary study outside of historical periods, which besides being sometimes inflexible also risk reproducing problematic structures of power. As a keyword, "space" conjures up a wide range of fields and associations—Marxist geographers like David Harvey, Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Doreen Massey and Edward Soja; landscape architecture theorists like Denis Cosgrove and James Elkin; Joseph Frank's well-trodden argument about the "plastic arts" and spatial form in literature; Judith Halberstam and Sara Ahmed's work on defining queer spaces; along with a range of literary-historicist approaches to reading textual spaces, like those mentioned above.

geography has countered Euclidean assumptions that space is static or fixed, to the point where "always spatialize" has sometimes superseded Fredric Jameson's famous directive to "always historicize."[24] My analysis of fictional interiors follows from the work of Doreen Massey, Edward Soja, Henri Lefebvre, Anthony Vidler, and David Harvey in treating space as a "social experience."[25] That is, I explore how the social world and its architecture are mutually constituted. For instance, gender-segregated spaces are often created based on the conception that men and women have different needs even as these separate spaces reinscribe differing social expectations for the sexes. In applying Soja's concept of the "socio-spatial" dialectic, I view rooms in conversation with the social world. That is, no matter how isolated or enclosed these fictional rooms seem, they are always produced in relation to a social, psychological, historical, and imperial matrix. As Vidler puts it, space "has been increasingly defined as a product of subjective projection and introjection, as opposed to a stable container of objects and bodies" (1). The home spaces I examine are products of complex environments influenced by both subjective (or psychological) and objective (external) features. Space is not the neutral backdrop of twentieth-century fiction, but an active agent in the texts' navigation of social, historical, and literary problems.[26] I draw also on the work of Massey and Sara Ahmed, who focus on space as a political agent in the fields of geography, imperial politics, and gender relations.[27] Both Massey and Ahmed are pioneering in their application of spatial concepts to

[24] See Doreen Massey, Edward Soja, David Harvey, all of whom challenge Euclidean and even Bergsonian conceptions of space. An alternative viewpoint is Ursula Heise's *Chronoschisms*, which challenges the contemporary usage of space in preference to time for analyzing narrative; Heise contends that time is central to the narrative experimentation of contemporary texts, which represent simultaneous contradictory experiences of time. Jameson's injunction is from *The Political Unconscious*; "always spatialize" has been used by Susan Stanford Friedman, among others.
[25] Hubbard, Phil from *Thinking Geographically: Space, Theory, and Contemporary Human Geography*, 14.
[26] See also David James's *Contemporary British Fiction and the Artistry of Space*.
[27] See Massey's *Space, Place, and Gender* and *For Space*, and Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology*.

gender dynamics and political conflicts and I follow their leads in reading the political, formal, and historical through the home.

My intervention in the criticism is threefold. First, I read national discourse through interior spaces, rather than exterior spaces. Although literary criticism routinely locates national upheaval or political change in exterior spaces like streets and cityscapes, for many populations in the twentieth century, particularly women and immigrants, the home was one of the primary sites for experiencing and responding to history.[28] The habit of applying cartographic techniques to literary texts has encouraged critics to read large-scale "exterior" spaces, largely to the exclusion of interior space.[29] This critical habit has yielded a productive body of readings on exterior space, but examining interiors, rather than exteriors, offers several valuable insights. Interior spaces are often the site where women, orphans, exiles, and immigrants navigate social identity and nationhood. Critical studies on modernist spaces have foregrounded the flaneur's experience of the city, the winding streets or public spaces of the city, or the spread of suburbanization.[30] Rather than focusing exclusively on exterior spaces that seem to be symbolic of British national identity, I examine how rooms shape the material and figurative experience of home, including national belonging and ideology. My particular focus on rooms—bedrooms,

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[28] For instance, Antoinette Burton reads Indian women's writing to argue that the home became a way for women to "claim a place in history at the intersection of the private and the public, the personal and the political, the national and the postcolonial" (4).

[29] See Franco Moretti's *Maps, Graphs, Trees*, Hegglund's *Metageographies*, or Andrea Goulet's work on maps in French crime fiction. See also Sally Bushell's "The Slipperiness of Literary Maps: Critical Cartography and Literary Cartography." Much of this work applies cartography and strategies of mapping to literary texts. Other critics like Andrew Thacker, Ian Baucom, Jed Esty and David James have brought attention to space as a metaphor for national discourses. Although space has become popular critical territory, much of this current work continues to focus on conventionally masculine exterior spaces—trains, buses, transportation, streets, monuments, and the city–at the expense of interior spaces, particularly domestic interior spaces. Critics who do examine interior spaces generally do so at the loss of larger political or cultural arguments. While critics like Victoria Rosner, Anna Snaith, and Tamar Katz examine modernist interiors, they largely avoid the political, focusing on psychology, architecture, and form. However, empire, war, transportation, technology, and globalization do not only happen in the public sphere.

[30] See, for example, Michael Whitworth's chapter on "Modernity and the City" in *Modernism*, in which he neglects to mention the home altogether and instead locates visible signs of empire in "immigrant communities" and "imperial monuments" but not in the home.

drawing rooms, hotel rooms, rented rooms and studio apartments, basements, and attics—offers a different approach than has so far been taken to twentieth-century British space.[31] By reorienting the relationship between interior space and "exterior" politics, we are able to gain a fuller perspective on fiction's commentary on home in the twentieth century. Moreover, I track issues of national belonging through narrative form to show how we might understand unusual narrative choices as a response to unsettled interior space.

This focus on narrative form is my second intervention in the field. Though it is commonplace for literary scholars to show the interrelation of narrative form and history, literary geography has not yet applied its historical and formal insights to interior space.[32] Literary geography frequently describes representational space as the interplay between material space and relational space.[33] I take this insight and apply it to formal readings of texts to see how narrative form is also at the intersection of material and relational space. In doing so, I argue that the breakdown of the perceived-solidity of space is enacted through the breakdown of certain narrative conventions, including omniscient or third-person narrators, regularly-occurring chapter breaks, narratives that unfold sequentially, or the accordance with generic conventions.[34] By reading experimental narrative styles as a response to disorienting spatial conditions, we better understand the disorienting, elusive, repetitive, or meandering narrative styles that these authors use, especially in representing the home. For modernist authors like Woolf, rooms also

[31]Thomas Foster has argued that domesticity is able to "literally and materially travel beyond the home" (10), but I would also argue that political, ideological, and historical concerns that have previously been located "beyond the home" also take shape and evolve inside the home.

[32] For the interplay of formal and historical readings, Said's *Culture and Imperialism* sets the bar; in it he argues that imperial issues "were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative. As one critic has suggested, nations themselves are narrations" (xiii). Snaith and Whitworth's edited volume on Woolf and space have shown, for instance, how "alternative formal aesthetics mirror Woolf's unsettling of fixed spatial formations" (2). However, all of these readings are on exterior and explicitly-imperial spaces, like the Empire Exhibitions. Surprisingly, none of the essays apply literary geographical insight to Woolf's interior rooms.

[33] Representational space is David Harvey's term for unquantifiable spaces, such as the space "where peoples' heads are" psychologically (273).

[34] In this reading, I follow the work of Kurt Koenigsberger, who likewise argues that the desire for imperial totality was represented in narrative form. For Koenigsberger, this takes shape through the image of the menagerie.

enable a change in the mode of narration, from a story unfolding sequentially, to stories unfolding laterally where we might see multiple characters' perspectives on a single moment, rather than a single character's perspective on multiple moments. Jon Hegglund has argued that modernist narrative techniques, such as Woolf's use of stream of consciousness, developed in conjunction with the rise of what he calls cartographic realism, in which the world is defined by "increasingly formal abstractions of geographic space" (4). In Hegglund's reading, modernist narrative techniques draw from the changing field of geography, which (like many modernist authors) worked to denaturalize narratives about the nation.[35] Despite the historical range and diversity of approach in the novels I examine, each text employs disorienting narrative techniques to write about the disorienting experience of feeling adrift at home in the twentieth century. In concert with critics like Hegglund, I read the narrative response to these modernist-geographical techniques developing throughout twentieth-century texts.[36]

Finally, my third intervention is to read literary experimentation vis-à-vis the home through texts that span the twentieth century. Rather than focus on modernism and contemporary fiction only, as seems to be the critical habit, I give equal attention to texts published in the middle of the century (roughly 1930-1970). In the last several years, critics have read modernist literary strategies side-by-side with contemporary experimental literature.[37] Scholars like Rebecca Walkowitz have argued that contemporary writers like Sebald, Rushdie, and Ishiguro use strategies of "modernist narrative," which include "wandering consciousness, paratactic syntax, recursive plotting, collage, and portmanteau language" (2). However, the concerns that

[35] Hegglund cites especially the "widespread production and consumptions of maps" as "objective indices of the world" (4).
[36] Hegglund argues that the field of geography developed alongside a narrative use of "abstract, spatial self-consciousness," in contrast with "conventions of classical narrative realism" (3).
[37] See, for instance Rebecca Walkowitz's *Cosmopolitan Style*, David James, Jahan Ramazani, and Peter Brooker's and Andrew Thacker's edited collection. See also Peter Kalliney.

troubled modernist writers and contemporary writers—psychological interiority, the violence of war, technological advances, the growth of British empire and the first indications of its decline, and changing migration and population patterns in and outside of cities—also develop and shape the middle of the century. Unlike Walkowitz, I want to argue that "disorienting" narrative strategies persist throughout the century, and I devote two chapters of this dissertation to texts written between 1930-1970. This period is often studied in relative isolation from modernism and contemporary writing, or is overlooked in studies that examine the beginning and end of the century.[38]

A brief overview of each chapter follows. My first chapter, on Virginia Woolf, examines the room as a metaphor for Woolf's new literary style and her implicit critique of British imperialism. Woolf's literary "architecture" foregrounds the unstable aspects of her constructions and posits that only by representing the drafts, gaps, and openings can you have a satisfying literary house. Her view of the home as a profoundly unstable space suggests how she saw subjectivity developing within the geographical construct of the nation, which is particularly unsettled in 1930's England. In my second chapter, I examine the difference between Elizabeth Bowen's 1930 representation of the Irish country house and J.G. Farrell's 1970 representation of the same space. For both, the disorienting or violent aspects of the house's interior rooms is represented through disorienting or violent aspects of the text's interior, especially its language and imagery. In chapter three, I examine the space of the boarding house in novels by Selvon, Lessing, and Rhys, who grapple firsthand with the effects of immigration, housing shortages, and

[38] For middle of the century work, see Marina MacKay, for example. One critic who suggests that there is an ethical imperative to examine "rupture" (stylistically or otherwise) across the century is Susan Stanford Friedman. In her essay, "Periodizing Modernism," she argues that "modernism contains an unacknowledged spatial politics that suppresses the global dimensions of modernism through time" (439). She interrogates the Modernist Studies Association's temporal guidelines for modernism and insists that it is possible—and necessary—to read for multiple, overlapping modernisms. Instead, she proposes seeing modernity as "relational, emphasizing the temporal rupture of before/after wherever and whenever such ruptures might occur in time and space."

the effects of the war's bombing raids on the city. Their representations of immigrants struggling to find belonging in rented rooms, temporary apartments, hostels, and shared flats help to connect Woolf's concerns in the 1930's about unstable national and imperial space to W.G. Sebald's concerns at the end of the century.[39] The fourth chapter, on Sebald's contemporary global migrations, argues that Sebald is a "queer stylist" who challenges heteronormative conceptions of the home through a series of orphaned, homeless, and exiled wanderers.

In each of the texts I examine, form follows material life. The authors' experimental narrative strategies often respond to the material conditions of life, reflecting the draftiness or insecurity of the characters' lives at home. Woolf, Bowen, and Rhys were influenced by the strategies of stream of consciousness, a technique that Joyce claimed was meant to "completely replac[e] conventional narrative form" in order to show readers "the uninterrupted unfolding of this thought process."[40] The development of the interior monologue was concomitant with the rise of the modern field of psychology, which was also a point of interest for modernism and the experimental writers that followed.[41] For Woolf, this new literary style had deliberately architectural aims. She criticizes realism for building a literary house where "there is not so much as a draught between the frames of the windows, or a crack in the boards," a space so tidy

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[39] Selvon, Lessing, and Rhys grapple with the effects of empire and war on both material interiors and on the psychological interiors, following from the concerns of modernist novelists like Woolf. In their novels, the disorientation of their characters' first-person narration often translates into disorientation for the reader.

[40] Joyce, in a letter to Valery Larbuad, quoted in Eduoard Dujardin's essay, *Interior Monologue*, in which he describes his own pioneering of the technique, which Joyce adapted into stream of consciousness (98).

[41] Dujardin is the first known innovator of the "interior monologue" technique and in *Interior Monologue*, he accounts for the development of his use of the style and James Joyce's later adoption and revision of the technique. Later critics like Robert Humphrey theorize that the difference between interior monologue and the stream of consciousness technique is that interior monologue is an extension of drama's use of the monologue—it is the recitation of a character's internal thoughts. In contrast, stream of consciousness is concerned with the thoughts below the surface of the conscious mind, that is, it is an "exploration of the prespeech levels of consciousness for the purpose, primarily, of revealing the psychic being of the characters" (Humphrey 1954, 4). William James is thought to be the first to use the term "stream of consciousness" in the first volume of his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), where it occurs ten times (pp. 180, 245, 279, 299, 319, 340, 347, 348, 349, 360). In many of these mentions in the text, he does not define stream of consciousness, but uses it in reference to one's thought processes—the way the mind absorbs the external events of the world.

that "life should refuse to live there."[42] Though I do not dwell on stream of consciousness style in this dissertation, I believe that this narrative technique evolved in a historical context where the cultural meaning of housing, houses, and homes was particularly vital. Interior monologue, the precursor for stream of consciousness, is a spatial form of literary experimentation, drawing the implicit comparison between psychological interiority and architectural interiors. In the first part of the twentieth century, an interest in subjective consciousness gained momentum and modernist writers used architectural metaphors in describing interior consciousness as interior spaces.[43] If, for modernist writers like Woolf, the mind is like a room, then it is already a room whose space is unstable.[44] This perspective gains traction later in the century, especially as the boundaries of British geography change radically.

Although these novels show that interior space is in flux, they also represent the home as a site of tension between the desire for solidity and the reality of continuous change. The room offers a distinctive metaphorical territory for novelists because as an enclosed but fluid space, it can simultaneously work as a metaphor for England's unsettled national interior space, for the space of the novel, and for the interior space of the mind. In each chapter, I connect material and political realities to literary experimentations with form. I argue that modernist writers like Woolf used rooms to critique Edwardian realism, which she saw as presenting falsely stable versions of subjectivity that implicitly echo imperialist strategies. Woolf uses interior rooms as an alterative model to the Edwardian rooms she saw as too closed, bounded, or fixed. Woolf's rooms, and the rooms of the writers that follow her, privilege fluidity, instability, and

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[42] "Modern Novels," 32.
[43] For example, in *The Waves*, Bernard describes his mind as a room open to the influence of the world around him: "I fill my mind with whatever happens to be the contents of a room or a railway carriage as one fills a fountain-pen in an inkpot" (68).
[44] As Anna Snaith has pointed out, Woolf anticipates the field of literary geography in her representation of space as perpetually shifting in response to the world around it.

unsettledness. For Anglo-Irish writers like Bowen and Farrell, the Irish War of Independence destabilized the Irish country house, once a site of stability relatively isolated from political concerns.[45] Likewise, the war interrupts or destabilizes the forms of the novels and the futures of the characters within them. In their novels, the rooms within the country house and hotel reflect how Irish space is renegotiated during the War of Independence. For mid-century writers such as Selvon, Rhys, and Lessing, their immigrant characters look to rooms to provide a sense of "home" in England, but they instead find that these spaces are as temporary or unstable as their sense of national belonging. While other critics tend to understand postcolonial mobility as movement through the city's public spaces, I argue that rented rooms and boarding houses are also critical sites of transience and migration. The apparent disjunctions and digressions in their novels' forms respond to the condition of exile and the pursuit of elusive national belonging. I conclude by examining Sebald's novels, written at the end of the century, to argue that his "queer" style replicates his texts' arguments about familial and national belonging in post-war Europe. The ruined family home works as an argument about political belonging, the capacity or necessity of national boundaries, and about the sanctity of ideologies that privilege family, marriage, or reproduction.

The instability of these spaces is not merely destabilizing; it is also constructive, creating space for a world where national space is less firmly bounded and more inclusive. I see the disorientation within rooms as a necessary precondition for new possibilities for the form of the novel and the form of the nation. For Woolf, unsettling rooms allows her to unsettle the Edwardian realist forms she found inadequate for her novels and her representation of psychological interiority. At the end of "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," she argues that unsettling

[45] In the literary imagination (as well as popular cultural representations), the Big House offered solace and stability, even if this is ultimately a myth.

literature's conventions will produce "the spasmodic, the obscure, the fragmentary, the failure" but that these failures will bring modern writers to "one of the great ages of English literature" (24). This experiment also helped Woolf articulate her criticisms of empire. For Bowen and Farrell, the unsettling of the Irish country house likewise allowed their orphaned exiled characters caught between Irishness and Englishness new possibilities for their personal lives and national affiliations. If Farrell is more pessimistic in 1970 about Ireland's conflicted political space, Bowen offers a sense of possibility earlier in the century, when she writes that the source of Dublin's "vitality and complexity as a city" is the result of the "continuous influx of foreign life" in which "the invader, the trader, the opportunist, the social visitor have all added strife or color" (*Essays* 31). For Rhys, Selvon, and Lessing, getting evicted from their rented rooms might remind them of the impossibility of assimilating within their imagined England, but the proliferation of more inclusive boarding houses and temporary rooms signals changes to English national space and the arrival of a different, more global Englishness. In Sebald's novels, unsettled family spaces, especially unstable childhood homes, reveal the problems with rooting citizenship and national belonging in family and reproductive units. Sebald takes unsystematic approaches to both his narrative forms and his representation of space and citizenship, but his haphazard approaches also have the capacity to create productive connections.[46]

Whereas the home was once seen as a site of seclusion, safety, or escape, these novels demonstrate that in the twentieth century, the relative stability of national interiors and local interiors give way, making everyone an exile, even at home. Rooms are physically unsettled by historical change like war, immigration, and technological advances. These changes undermine

[46] As when Sebald argued: "Not even my PhD research was done systematically. It was always done in a random, haphazard fashion. And the more I got on, the more I felt that, really, one can find something only in that way, i.e., in the same way in which, say, a dog runs through a field" (*Emergence of Memory* 94).

the illusion of home as a stable metaphorical and ideological space, causing characters to rethink their material homes and the "home" of their national space. These unstable spaces are both destabilizing and generative, undermining the ideologies that underpin that desire for national stability, including exclusive, racist, prejudiced, and conservative practices. By disrupting the stability of "home," these novels show moments not just of paralysis or destruction, but also moments of openness, inclusiveness, and the possibility of new orientations.

CHAPTER 1: "NOTHING SETTLED OR STAYED UNBROKEN": VIRGINIA WOOLF'S HOUSE OF FICTION[47]

> [O]n or about December 1910 human character changed […] In life one can see the change, if I may use a homely illustration, in the character of one's cook. The Victorian cook lived like a leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable; the Georgian cook is a creature of sunshine and fresh air; in and out of the drawing room, now to borrow the *Daily Herald*, now to ask advice about a hat […] All human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature.
>
> --Virginia Woolf, "Character in Fiction"

The first decades of the twentieth century saw a proliferation of popular texts on English country houses as symbols of national and domestic stability.[48] These texts, with titles like *The Modern English House* and *The Growth of the English House*, embody nostalgia for an imagined ideal English country house of the past. At the same time, they project intense anxiety about how the English house is changing, especially regarding the migration of the middle classes into the suburbs and the subsequent contamination and unsettling of the pastoral ideal. For these Edwardian writers, the house is a symbol of the stability of English national culture and its decay was a harbinger of unwanted changes to Englishness.[49] For Virginia Woolf, who followed contentiously on the heels of Edwardian realism, both the Edwardian house and the Edwardian novel were in "ruins" and must be rebuilt entirely, with greater attention to the variable architecture of national and literary space.[50] Woolf's work actively seeks to revise Edwardian fiction by rewriting the symbolism of the house, primarily through the space of the room. In a

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[47] See Henry James "The Art of Fiction."
[48] Jon Hegglund lists *The British Home of Today, The English House, The Modern English House, The English Home, The Growth of the English House*, and *English House Design: A Review*, all published between 1904-1911, p. 399.
[49] The stability of English national culture is, of course, a fiction, but one that the Edwardians embraced more straightforwardly than Woolf and her contemporaries.
[50] See "Thunder at Wembley" (413), and "Character in Fiction" (388).

series of essays and in her novel *The Waves*, Woolf renovates the Edwardian vision of home, calling into question the house as a site of stable national culture or coherent subjective identity. Like the Edwardians she revises, Woolf represents the house as a useful tool for understanding both Englishness and the novel, but unlike that of the Edwardians, Woolf's house reflects all the contradictions, disturbances, and disorientation of her historical moment.

Woolf's literary "architecture" foregrounds the unstable aspects of her literary constructions and she openly contends that drafts and gaps are necessary to create a satisfying literary house. Woolf's construction of the house as a profoundly unstable space suggests how she saw subjectivity developing within the geographical construct of the nation, which she represents as particularly unsettled in 1930's England. Yet in spite of Woolf's preference for drafty spaces, her houses retain the scaffolding of Edwardian solidity, primarily through the desires of her characters, who still turn to the house for stability, even if they find these spaces to be continually changing. Woolf's rooms are caught between Edwardian conceptions of the home—stable and fixed—and later theorizations of the home as in flux.[51] In *The Waves*, which this chapter examines in depth, Woolf uses the room as a way to attend to the desire for stability amidst the disorienting expansiveness of empire, even as the rooms themselves are destabilized by historical change.[52] *The Waves* was published in 1931, a decade after the height of the British empire and in the middle of two world wars, at a time when Britain's national narrative was transforming.[53] In Woolf's novel, unsettled rooms critique what she perceives as overly stable Edwardian and realist versions of subjectivity, nationhood, and narrative form. In Woolf's oeuvre, the room offers a distinctive metaphorical territory because as an enclosed but fluid

[51] See, for instance, postmodern geographical conceptions of the home as "always in process" (Massey 3).
[52] For instance, as I will discuss, advancing technologies, patterns of migration, and imperial relationships.
[53] Here, I define the height of British empire in geographic terms. In 1922, the British empire controlled the largest landmass and population group than any other time in its history.

space, it simultaneously works as a metaphor for the space of the novel, the interior space of the mind, and England's unsettled national interior space, all of which are caught between the desire for stability and the reality of constant change.

Throughout Woolf's oeuvre, the room is a metric of change in her social world, for issues ranging from gender relations to England's colonial politics. I open this chapter with one of Woolf's most well-known passages, from "Character in Fiction," in which she asserts that "on or about December 1910 human character changed." Although this is perhaps Woolf's most famous line, critics rarely offer commentary on the paragraph that follows. In it, Woolf describes not King George's ascension of the throne or Roger Fry's post-impressionist exhibit, but a change in her house. This shift, from the Victorian cook—"like a leviathan in the lower depths"—to the Georgian one—"in and out of the drawing room"—is for Woolf the defining example of social change. Woolf sees "human relations" shifting, which changes how she writes about the home.[54] As an example of literary or historical change, Woolf's relationship with her cook may seem insignificant, or even negligible. However, her writing repeatedly draws on architectural metaphors to grapple with the changes she sees around her, from the realm of literary fiction to imperial history. Although Woolf rejects the Edwardian nostalgia for a stable home, her fiction draws on rooms as a site of stability in a world disoriented by change.

In *The Waves*, Woolf's apparent focus on the "space of the mind" is simultaneously a critique of British imperialism. Through her representation of unsettled rooms, Woolf critiques territorial nationalism as a key geographical and ideological construct that delineates

[54] See also Freidrich Engels who explores patterns of social formation in "Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State." See also Alison Light's *Mrs Woolf and the Servants*. In it, Light describes how servants went from being mostly invisible in the basement and corridors in the nineteenth century, to sharing space more openly with their mistresses in the twentieth. It became increasingly difficult to avoid intimate proximity with servants as households needed fewer and they lived more closely to families. Growing up, Woolf's household of eleven needed seven servants to cook, clean, carry bathwater upstairs, empty chamber pots, and keep the house in order. But by the time Woolf wrote "Character in Fiction," her house employed only two or three servants.

subjectivity. In *The Waves*, colonial expansion and globalization make "home" an increasingly unstable concept. In the novel, "home" is disoriented in its material forms (the house, via movement through rooms) and metaphorical forms (citizenship and national affiliation). In *The Waves*, rooms respond to both interior and exterior change, including the fluctuations of memory, the violence of war, or the death of friends. Woolf's "architectural method," as I call it, uses rooms as a structuring motif in which the novel and her representation of consciousness are depicted as movement in or through rooms. The room enables Woolf to write stories that unfold laterally, rather than sequentially.[55] In her use of architectural metaphors, Woolf foregrounds the shifting aspects of space, rejecting closed or overly-stable forms of construction in favor of descriptions of thresholds, openness, gaps, and absences in rooms and houses. Woolf's treatment of space prefigures work by Doreen Massey, Edward Soja, and others who argue that space is not static or closed, but is a sphere of openness.[56] The subject of space has gained recent critical attention in Woolf studies, and several scholars have laid important groundwork establishing the significance of spatial metaphors to modernist studies.[57] However, among the critics who read space in Woolf's work, nearly all focus on her representation of public spaces, reconstituting the significance of monuments, exhibits, and parks.[58] In contrast, I focus on Woolf's representation of interior space, specifically how she expresses the ideological and metaphorical configuration

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[55] For instance, we might see multiple characters' perspectives on a single moment, rather than a single character's perspective on multiple moments. We move spatially through individual character's orientations rather than through time.

[56] Or as Massey argues, space is a realm that is "always under construction."

[57] See work by Andrew Thacker, Con Coroneos, Deborah Parsons, Anna Snaith, Morag Shiach, and Victoria Rosner. In Woolf studies, critics have generally taken one of two approaches: one camp examines the philosophical and theoretical aspects of space as a representative device; the other camp focuses on historical and material space as a contextual influence on fiction. Among those who take the former approach are Rebecca Walkowitz, Jane Goldman, Victoria Rosner, Morag Shiach, Liesl Olson, Alison Light, Tamar Katz, and Jeremy Hawthorn (in Attie deLange). Among those who take the latter are Andrew Thacker, Ian Baucom, Linden Peach, L.K. Schroeder, Youngjoo Son, and Nobuyoshi Ota.

[58] For example, a collection of papers given at the nineteenth annual Virginia Woolf conference is titled "Woolf and the City" and focuses almost exclusively on streets, cities, and landscapes in Woolf's work. Of the 29 essays, only two mention interior spaces.

of "home" through rooms. Although two of Woolf's novels and essays feature the word "room" in their titles, there has not yet been a study of how rooms function in Woolf's oeuvre.

In my reading, rooms are a way to synthesize many threads of literary criticism on Woolf, bringing together Woolf's interest in the interior mind, stream of consciousness narration, and questions of empire and political engagement.[59] Woolf mobilizes rooms on behalf of larger arguments about territorial nationalism in which the boundaries of the nation are renegotiated by imperial expansion and contraction, immigration, war, and globalization. Through the room, Woolf explores how subjecthood—both psychological and political—is unsettled by colonial expansion. This chapter proceeds as follows: a preliminary section examines Woolf's essays and the development of her "architectural method," an approach that underscores her narratives of empire. The chapter then moves to two related sections on how Woolf navigated imperial politics and how the destabilized subjecthood of her characters is represented through the unsettled relationship between rooms and home. For Woolf, interior space is more than a convenient metaphor for literary writing; it serves as the point of contact between human experiences and the stories that radiate from them.

"Draughts" and Drafts: Woolf's New Architecture

Between 1919-1925, Woolf wrote and rewrote a series of essays that reflect on the form of the novel and her dissatisfaction with the literary methods of Edwardian writers like Bennett, John Galsworthy, and H. G. Wells.[60] These essays underscore Woolf's contradictory use of

[59] A few critics like Galia Benziman and Rebecca Walkowitz have tried to bridge the gap between the formal/psychological readings of Woolf and the political readings of her work.

[60] In particular, she seems dissatisfied with plodding realist forms, lengthy descriptions of settings which do little to illustrate a novel's cast of characters, and the neatness of the realist novel that counters her experience of life. As she complains in "Modern Fiction," "we go on perseveringly, conscientiously, constructing our two and thirty chapters after a design which more and more ceases to resemble the vision in our minds" (160).

architecture: on the one hand, the room affords Woolf the illusion of stability amidst disorienting globalizing forces; on the other hand, Woolf's literary room is markedly more unsettled, drafty, and unstable than that of her predecessors. In a diary entry about *Jacob's Room*, Woolf wrote that she wanted to create "a new form for a new novel" one that was "entirely different this time: no scaffolding; scarcely a brick to be seen; all crepuscular" (*L* 2, 13).[61] As an architect of a new novel, Woolf wanted a design that abandoned the overly-concrete foundations of past novels in favor of something "crepuscular."[62] Woolf criticized Edwardian writers for their orderly novels, arguing that Bennett's books are well constructed but complaining that because "there is not so much as a draught between the frames of the windows, or a crack in the boards" perhaps "life should refuse to live there" (32, 158). One of Woolf's continued complaints about Bennett, Galsworthy, and Wells is that their novels are too insular, closed off to "draughts" that threaten to introduce mess into their impossibly tidy fictional houses. Although Woolf wanted a new form of fiction to represent consciousness, she was cautious about creating an insular literary form.[63] The metaphor of the room offers Woolf a compelling way to think about consciousness (or psychological interiority), while accommodating the influence of the outside world.

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[61] In a letter to Ethel Smyth, Woolf describes the work of essay writing as "a kind of cabinet work, fitting parts together, making one paragraph balance another" (*L* 4, 195). In her introduction to *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf wrote that when she began the novel, she felt that "nature" had given her an idea "without providing a house for it to live in…[t]he novel was the obvious lodging, but the novel it seemed was built on the wrong plan" (550).

[62] Woolf's "crepuscular" designs may have spoken to her interest in creating a prose version of Yeats's Celtic twilight. From the Latin *crepusculum*, or "twilight," Woolf's word choice suggests that she saw the novel in a point of transition, at a threshold. Literary critics have elsewhere taken up Woolf's interest in transition. Scholars like Victoria Rosner and Laura Doyle have argued that Woolf's work navigated both social and literary thresholds. Rosner has articulated the importance of spatial thresholds as a metaphor for social thresholds in early twentieth-century novels (62). She gives examples of historical thresholds like the changed century, different relationship between men and women, and even modernism itself. In her introduction to a MFS special issue on Woolf, Doyle also uses spatial metaphors repeatedly when discussing Woolf's work, pointing to the "barriers" or "bridges" and the "space between us" that Woolf's texts attempt to tackle. She also describes Woolf's novels as houses "seemingly empty but in fact full of the dead, the past, and the other" (7).

[63] David Herman makes a compelling argument that the "inward turn" is not a rejection of the exterior world in modernist literature (248).

Rooms, as I discussed in the introduction, are unique because even on an etymological level, they suggest the marriage of opposites, combining enclosure and spaciousness. In an architectural capacity, rooms in a house also have different functions and thus imply multiplicity within a unit—a theme that Woolf applies to her representation of "personality" as well as empire.[64] Because rooms can be either private (the bedroom) or public (the drawing room or even the dormitory room), they challenge the distinction between inner and outer (the self and the world, England and its colonies, psychological and social experience) that occupies much of Woolf's work.[65] Two of Woolf's published works explicitly feature the room as a site of conflicting desires—*A Room of One's Own* and *Jacob's Room*. In *A Room of One's Own*, the room is both a material and a psychological necessity for women writers. Women need not only a room (four walls and a door that locks) to write, they need the psychological room that such a space provides. In *Jacob's Room*, Jacob's room is the site of his presence and absence. His presence, mostly conferred through objects in the room, suggests that the room is a container for personality. At the same time, his absence in the empty shoes and empty armchair evokes an alternate narrative about the war and the impossibility of entirely understanding another person.[66] In "Character in Fiction," Woolf argues that the novel must move away from preaching "doctrines" and move toward expressing consciousness, or "human character" (430). Although David Herman argues that in Woolf's work, "the mind [is] viewed as an interior space," I want to attend to how Woolf's version of interior space includes disorienting "draughts" from outside

[64] In Woolf's letters and diaries, she refers to the difficulty of drawing the multiple sides of herself together to present "one Virginia." Her characters echo this sentiment, most notably Clarissa Dalloway who laments her reflection in the mirror: "That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre" (32).
[65] See, for instance, Anna Snaith's early book, *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations*. London: Macmillan, 2000.
[66] See the novels' commentary: ""It is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done" (214).

(248).[67] In Woolf's novels, interior spaces and consciousness are produced in relationship to the world outside. From the breezes just out the window to the life of British soldiers in the trenches to the British colonies in India and Africa, the outside world interrupts and reshapes the world inside.

Very often, Woolf uses images of doors, windows, and walls to describe how external events intrude on private lived spaces, and to introduce flux or instability into the relatively bounded space of the novel. In her 1939 essay, "A Sketch of the Past," she compares her childhood to a "circle…surrounded by a vast space…[a] great hall I could liken it to; with windows letting in strange lights; and murmurs and spaces of deep silence. But somehow into that picture must be brought, too, the sense of movement and change. Nothing remained stable long" (79). This passage is retrospective but it is also about the *process* of retrospection. Woolf describes her childhood in terms that figuratively describe the essay itself: an enclosed space ("circle" or a "great hall") that the outside world ("vast space" surrounds it and "strange lights" come through the margins) impinges upon. For Woolf to characterize her childhood aptly, she must bring "movement" to the enclosures of both the narrative space and of the metaphorical hall of her childhood. Like Woolf's other rooms, the childhood hall is both real and fictional, enclosed and open. In "A Sketch of the Past," the dynamism of interior space reflects a form of narrative instability and highlights how Woolf used doors and windows to disrupt the boundaries of interior space.[68]

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[67] Woolf's novels also treat space as a potent trigger for memory, most notably when the space and sounds of a literal doorway creaking catapults Clarissa Dalloway through a metaphorical doorway into her past in the opening pages of *Mrs. Dalloway*. This differs from, for example, Proust's treatment of memory, where objects (a cake dipped in tea) trigger involuntary memories.

[68] Further, even words on the page are unstable for Woolf, who writes, "Words, English words, are full of echoes, of memories, of associations—naturally. They have been out and about, on people's lips, in their houses, in the streets, in the fields, for so many centuries" (248). Through their movement through different spaces—houses, streets, fields—words, like their speakers, shift. In *Jacob's Room*, she writes, "But words have been used too often; touched

Woolf wrote "Character in Fiction" in the same year that she visited the British Empire Exhibitions at Wembley. The Exhibition showcased cultural artifacts from most of Britain's imperial territories and attracted almost 27 million visitors. The exhibition drew Woolf's criticism for offering a falsely coherent representation of the world, a similar criticism to the one she would lob at Arnold Bennett's realism in "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown." For Woolf, Edwardian realism is complicit with imperialist ideology because both present a totalizing worldview. Woolf's essay "Thunder at Wembley" imaginatively dismantles what Kurt Koenigsberger calls the "economy of realism" upon which both the exhibition and Bennett's books rely.[69] In the essay, Woolf imagines the simultaneous destruction of the exhibition and of the British Empire by way of a storm: "The Empire is perishing…the Exhibition is in ruins" (413). In an earlier iteration of "Character in Fiction," "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown," Woolf also uses the term "ruins," then to describe Edwardian fiction, which she calls a "tumbled mansion" in "ruins and splinters" (388). For Woolf, Edwardian imperialism manifested itself through its problematic representation of consciousness as overly whole and stable, a configuration she saw was "smashing and crashing…breaking and falling, crashing, and destruction" (433-34).[70] Amidst the ruins of empire and Edwardian novels, Woolf tasked herself with constructing a new house of fiction, one that challenged imperialist ideology, the conventions of realism, and the understanding of the human mind through its representation of rooms. In *The Waves*, home is a

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and turned, and left exposed to the dust of the street. The words we seek hang close to the tree" (126). Words are like objects, changed by proximity to the street or other people.

[69] See Kurt Koenigsberger. For Koenigsberger, "Bennett's realist prescriptions for the novel developed during the heyday of colonial and imperial exhibitions, and it is perhaps not coincidental that his conceptions of the novel resemble those strategies of exhibitions designed to foster an intense and engrossing realism, since both the novel and the exhibition share a worldview" (105).

[70] Suzanne Raitt's essay "Finding a voice: Virginia Woolf's early novels" reads *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* as early experiments with Woolf's interest in narrative voice that she hones differently in later novels. Although some recent criticism resituates Woolf's early novels as strongly related to her later work, this chapter does not attempt to engage these kind of patterns, but follows the work of Raitt in seeing *Jacob's Room* and the novels that follow it as a stylistic departure from her earlier works.

fiction whose stability and hominess is constructed retrospectively.[71] Even though rooms presumably constitute a home, the rooms themselves are ever-changing and thus undermine the connection between and individual subject and his or her sense of belonging at home.

Beyond the effects of globalization and imperial expansion, new domestic technologies and concomitant changes in social mores destabilized Victorian gender and class structures, which had been embedded in the architecture of private spaces.[72] Advancements like electric lights and running water meant that middle class houses in London no longer needed to accommodate a group of ten or twelve servants to handle human waste, light innumerable fires, or carry bath water up and down the stairs. Middle class families, including Woolf's, were the primary group to benefit from these improved standards of living.[73] These advancements made it easier for women to live alone, or without men.[74] In her essay "Hyde Park Gate," for instance, Woolf uses the folding doors as a metric of household change. In her Victorian childhood home, the folding doors separated men and women's spaces and delineated the spaces of servants and family. They were so crucial to the Victorian home that she asks, "How could family life have been carried on without them?" And yet, by 1904, not only does Woolf carry on without the folding doors, she also lives happily with her unmarried sister and younger brother, without male guardianship at all for several years. The actual spaces of houses and apartments are mutating—Woolf's childhood house underwent many restorations and remodeling—and Woolf and her

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[71] Home is something that is experienced retrospectively (i.e. from the boarding school, from the trenches) partly because the rooms that presumably constitute the character are ever-changing. See, for example: "'This is my first night at school,' said Susan, 'away from my father, away from my home" (27), "At home the hay waves over the meadows" (34), "I do not stand lost, like Susan, with tears in my eyes remembering home" (35), "At home, the waves are mile long" (37). Home is an imagined, remembered space.

[72] See Alison Light's *Mrs. Woolf and the Servants* and Morag Shiach's "London Rooms" for discussions of some of these technological advancements, including the introduction of hot water and electricity into homes in the 1920's. See also Victoria Rosner on changes to architecture as they relate to changing gender politics (14).

[73] See Light.

[74] The room that Woolf imagines in *A Room of One's Own* is not just a physical space that represents the woman's social and financial autonomy. It is also a symbolic space: the mental room any writer needs to pursue the craft.

compatriots moved their residences far more often than their parents had. These changes to Woolf's living spaces provoked her to question the relationship between rooms, home, and subjecthood, a question she revisits in her representation of subjecthood in *The Waves*.

Center and Periphery/ Woolf's Webs

The Waves is largely considered Woolf's most experimental novel.[75] Woolf herself called it a "play-poem," a lyrical novel about the lives of six friends growing up in England, punctuated by italicized passages that describe the progress of a single day over the ocean.[76] The novel, full of contradictions, demands a kind of Keatsian negative capability in its readers. The friends—Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda, Louis (and Percival, the seventh friend and implicit center)—are simultaneously six sides of the same mind and six different people whose shared childhood and shared nursery engender shared psychological territory. The novel takes place in a single day but also over a lifetime. It is a novel about mixture, movement, and change, using the ocean's waves as a metaphor for this continual flow that connects the different sides of the world in ever-changing motion. Through Bernard, the storyteller among the six friends, the novel is also about the desire to hold this perpetual ebb and flow still through narrative. Bernard is tasked with "describ[ing] what we have all seen so that it becomes a sequence" (37). In ordering their experiences into a sequence, Bernard draws on architectural metaphors; he argues that storytelling is a matter of describing rooms and that in telling stories, "I shall go into more rooms, more different rooms, than any of you" (134). Rooms at once capture the relation of the individual mind to the collective minds of the six friends, and they capture the relation of Englishness to its territorial expansion through empire. In the novel, Woolf expresses the

[75] See Ellen Friedman, James Harker, and Jean Dubino, among others.
[76] Diary, Vol. 3 Saturday 18 June, 1927.

ideological and metaphorical configuration of "home" through rooms and through subjects in rooms. *The Waves* is a novel where psychological territory works as a metaphor for national territory, and the relationship among the six minds implicitly critiques the imperial relationship among British colonies.

In this section, I examine how the room signals an (impossible) desire for stability amidst the disorienting effects of British imperial expansion. The next section moves inward to explore how Woolf uses the room as a metaphor for the mind, which in *The Waves* remains constructed in conjunction with national belonging. In both, the room offers something unique to Woolf: it is a space that is both contained and expansive, two contradictory impulses that shape her representation of Englishness and of interiority. Characters in the novel experience rooms as part of a larger spatial relationship between a metropolitan "center" in England the various colonial "peripheries." The first part of this section title, "Center and Periphery," draws on what I am aware is a false binary between metropolitan center and the colonial peripheries. I use the term, however, because Woolf's novels so often evoke this opposition, even if only to dismantle it. The characters in her novels employ the language of center and periphery, even as the text itself rapidly deconstructs this kind of inside/outside binary. A more responsive terminology includes Alan Lester's preferred terms: "networks, webs, and circuits" to describe empire's spatial relationships. Networks and webs are spatial concepts that for Lester more accurately reflect the "multiple trajectories that define any space and place" (124). Thus, the second half of the title takes into account how Woolf's novels also represent the spatial relations between England and elsewhere, between inside the house and outside of it, and between battlefields and civilian spaces as a series of "webs" with multiple nodal points rather than a single center.

Woolf's writing repeatedly shows that the interior spaces her characters occupy in England cannot be divorced from British imperial space. Britain's empire underwent major changes during Woolf's lifetime. British territories continued to expand into the 1930's, but imperialism gained many critics in the early part of the twentieth century. Among them was Woolf's husband, Leonard, who published his own critiques of colonialism as well as those of others at the Hogarth Press.[77] Although the Treaty of Versailles expanded the empire, anti-imperial sentiment grew in London as colonies in India and Southeast Asia fought for political independence in the early part of the century. Leonard Woolf's oft-repeated phrase about Woolf—that she was "the least political animal that has lived since Aristotle invented the definition"[78]—has been resoundingly disproved by critics.[79] In fact, Woolf was deeply involved in her husband's anti-imperialist work, helping Leonard with research and reading his work on empire in Africa.[80] Karen Levenback and Mark Hussey have also shown how Woolf's civilian experience of World War I shaped her writings even when her texts seem to overtly avoid political commentary. I want to shift the terms of the debate about Woolf's politics slightly; rather than focusing on how exterior events affect the interior world of Woolf's novels, I want to explore how Woolf saw interior worlds (architectural and psychological) engage with political questions on empire and war. Political upheaval is not merely experienced in but enacted (and re-enacted) through domestic space.

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[77] Leonard Woolf's 1920 *Empire and Commerce*, for example; the Woolfs also published many anti-colonial manuscripts, including those by Mulk Raj Anand, C.L.R. James, Norman Keys, Lord Olivier, Edward Thompson, Graham Pole, K.M. Panikkar, and Githendu Parmenas Mockerie, among others (Southworth 118-119). John Willis describes Leys's book as a polemic about the "colonial government's disastrous land policies, its exploitation of native labor, its relocation of tribes, and its failure to provide minimal educational training programs to the Africans" (215).

[78] Leonard Woolf, 27. Via Jessica Berman, 116.

[79] See Kathy Phillips' *Virginia Woolf Against Empire*. See also Booth and Rigby.

[80] See Kathy Phillips, among others.

Characters experience home as a sense of dwelling, of "being at home," and as an awareness of their subjecthood through their rooms. Earlier, I argued that Woolf critiqued the relationship between subjectivity and territorial nationalism through the room. To give an example, Jinny's boarding school room is a space where her subjecthood—as an individual and as a British citizen—develops. As the sun rises and light enters her room, Jinny reflects on a symbiosis between her sense of self and her room: "As each thing in the bedroom grows clear, my heart beats quicker. I feel my body harden, and become pink, yellow, brown" (46). The room constitutes Jinny's sense of self, of being "at home" in herself, because as the room "grows clear" in the light of the day, Jinny also feels her body become clear—it "harden[s]" and is illuminated. Jinny also experiences a larger symbiosis between the room and her sense of belonging in the nation:

> [A]s I bend my head down over the basin, I will let the Russian Empress's veil flow about my shoulders. The diamonds of the Imperial crown blaze on my forehead. I hear the roar of the hostile mob as I step out on to the balcony. Now I dry my hands, vigorously, so that Miss, whose name I forget, cannot suspect that I am waving my fist at an infuriated mob. "I am your Empress, people." My attitude is one of defiance. I am fearless. I conquer. But this is a thin dream. This is a papery tree. Miss Lambert blows it down. Even the sight of her vanishing down the corridor blows it to atoms (47).

In this passage, the text exagerates and deflates Jinny's sovereignty in her room and through the room, the nation. In her room, Jinny is at home, not only as an individual, but as a subject, to the

extent that she imagines herself in control of her own empire:[81] "The diamonds of the Imperial crown blaze on my forehead" (47). And yet, as her private space is disrupted—by Miss Lambert walking down the corridor—her sense of belonging is likewise disrupted and Jinny thinks " It is not solid; it gives me no satisfaction—this Empress dream" (47). Jinny's room is a part of how she experiences her participation in empire, but the room itself is liable to disruptions and thus destabilizes Jinny's sense of imperial control—her dream is "not solid," but neither is her room.

In her other novels, Woolf's language signals such violations of the sanctity of domestic boundaries, as in *Jacob's Room*, which describes the mantelpiece in Miss Perry's sitting-room, with "a green clock guarded by Britannia leaning on her spear" (142).[82] Such moments suggest the possible violence implicit in seemingly innocuous household spaces, but I would contend that they also reveal how interior rooms are implicated in imperial violence (especially via Miss Perry's clock). *Jacob's Room* bears out Jacob's perspective on British imperial politics through his room, where his ambivalence about British imperialism represented by an analogy between his jumbled mind and his jumbled private space:

> But then there was the British Empire which was beginning to puzzle him; nor was he altogether in favour of giving Home Rule to Ireland. What did the Daily Mail say about that? For he had grown to be a man, and was about to be immersed in things—as indeed the chambermaid, emptying his basin upstairs, fingering keys, studs, pencils, and bottles of tabloids strewn on the dressing-table, was aware (191).

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[81] Jinny imagines herself as the Russian Empress. At the time, the Russian empire had many ties to the British empire and the Russian Empress, Alexandra Feodorovna, to whom Jinny likely refers, was a granddaughter of Queen Victoria and nearly married the son of the Prince of Wales.

[82] In other exterior spaces, there are signals of violence, for instance in the "lamps of London" outside Jacob's apartment, which "upheld the dark as upon the points of burning bayonets" (132).

In this passage, Woolf uses zeugma to insinuate the relationship between Jacob's immersion in political "things" and the "things" that occupy his dressing table. The chambermaid intuits Jacob's growing manhood—and implicitly, his preoccupation with messy political questions—through the mess of his dressing table. Syntactically, the passage links questions of empire with questions of Jacob's personal space, implying that the questions Jacob will explore, especially those of empire and war, are disorderly despite his desire to come to a conclusion on the questions of empire or Home Rule. The room, in Woolf's oeuvre, becomes a flashpoint for the tension between the reality of political upheaval and characters' (implicit or explicit) desires for political certainty or stability.

In Woolf's other novels, war is experienced through the rooms of the characters' houses, where decay, absence, and accumulation signal how war unsettles the psychological and material space of home.[83] In *To the Lighthouse*, the effects of war are manifested through the natural decay in the apparently non-military space of the house. While the Ramsays' summerhouse is geographically distant from the battlefield, the novel's language combines the terms of military invasion with descriptions of the house's decay. Woolf's stylistic choices perform the modes through which the house experiences the war. Nature itself wars on the house:

> So with the house empty and the doors locked and the mattresses rolled round, those stray airs, advance guards of great armies, blustered in, brushed bare boards, nibbled and fanned, met nothing in bedroom or drawing-room that wholly resisted them but only hangings that flapped, wood that creaked, the bare legs of tables, saucepans and china already furred, tarnished, cracked (128).

[83] In addition, *Mrs. Dalloway* represents war through the space of Clarissa's and Septimus's private spaces. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Big Ben, a symbol of both Englishness and the subaltern, repeatedly intrudes on her drawing-room. War's violence metaphorically intrudes not merely through the perspective of the traumatized WWI soldier, Septimus, but also through the space and view of the civilian. As Benjamin Hagen has argued, that the clock signals both a "state of alterity" (545) and an English monument. For examples from *Mrs. Dalloway*, see pp. 7, 40, 91.

The ten years encompassing the Great War are figured as the accumulated debris and dust in the Ramsays' house. A natural element, such as wind, makes the furniture and floorboards in the house deteriorate; the extent of the decay marks the passage of time. At the same time, the wind represents other events that are external to the house. The winds are described as military front lines; they are "advance guards of great armies," figuratively bringing the violence of war into the interior space of the Ramsays' summerhouse. In other ways, the war's violence is literal because it prevents the Ramsays from visiting and allows nature to wreak havoc on the empty house. The housekeeper, Mrs. McNab, deplores that "once they had been coming, but had put off coming, what with the war, and travel being so difficult these days; they had never come all these years…but never wrote, never came, and expected to find things as they had left them" (140). The alternative space of WWI is the specter that haunts the Ramsays' house; it impinges on their summer home and leaves its imprint in the forms of both accumulations (mundane dust) and absences (the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay and two of her children, one from war and one from childbirth).

Long considered Woolf's least political novel, *The Waves* ostensibly focuses on subjective interiority to the exclusion of political concerns.[84] However, I see subjective interiority, manifested through Woolf' architectural method, entwined with her commentary on imperial politics. In the novel, both the territory of the self and the territory of the nation are unsettled through the space of the room. I want to build on others' arguments that Woolf's stylistic choices represent ideological criticism by suggesting that Woolf's work is not only anti-imperial in her formal tactics, but also in its representation of interiority through the untenable

[84] See Levenback's comment on the novel, 2.

relationship between space and the desire for stability.[85] Colonial politics are embedded in the structure of the spaces that Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Rhoda, Louis, Susan, and Percival occupy, as Bernard points out early in the novel when he describes the friends' spatial proximity as "edged with mist. We make an unsubstantial territory" (16), a description that invokes the "unsubstantial" territorial boundaries of empire that recur throughout the text. For the friends, their sense of Englishness is shaped by their experiences with colonial India, a space that they struggle to imagine even as it is omnipresent in their experience of the metropolis. Fredric Jameson's influential argument that British colonial spaces defined Englishness even as they made it impossible for "daily life in the metropolis" to "be grasped immanently" is applicable to Bernard's remark about the friends' "territory" (51). The reality of Percival's departure erodes the boundaries of the friends' territory, both psychic and national. The consciousness of the six narrator-characters of *The Waves* is shaped by their encounter-from-afar with colonial India when their friend Percival falls off his horse and dies. What Edward Said calls the "structure of attitude and reference" toward empire is embedded in Woolf's representations of Percival's travels to India and the subsequent changes to the characters' shared space. In *The Waves*, Percival's departure to India and eventual death disorient the remaining friends, shifting their experience of "home" (in both resonances: their houses and their sense of nationhood) and their senses of identity.

Percival's death takes place roughly in the middle of his friends' lives and precisely in the middle of the novel—it is the first line of the fifth of nine chapters. Formally, Percival is at the center of the narrative and Bernard likewise locates him as the center of the group: "About [Percival] my feeling was: he sat there in the centre. Now I go to that spot no longer. The place is

[85] I.e. that Woolf's rejection of realism is a rejection of patriarchal literary methods. See, for example, James Wurtz or Rebecca Walkowitz.

empty" (153). A little later, Bernard remarks to himself, "I turn to that spot in my mind and find it empty" (156). Percival's "place" at the center of the novel is textual, psychological, and spatial. He exists not only as a bodily figure, absent from the center of the collective table the friends share, but also as a psychological absence—a mental and emotional "spot" or "place" in Bernard's mind he once occupied but no longer does. For Neville, Percival's departure for India reinforces the space that the friends share even as their interiority is dependent upon Percival's colonial geography; he thinks, "We are walled in here. But India lies outside" (135). Percival's absence emphasizes the friends' feeling of interiority; that is, interiority in the sense of being "walled in" in England while Percival is "outside" that seemingly enclosed space. Jinny also relates Percival's travel to walls: she comments that the friends exist on a "globe whose walls are made of Percival" (145). Percival's departure produces two kinds of walls—the walls that contain the friends inside the restaurant and inside England while Percival travels outside; and the walls of a "globe" where Percival's travels to far-away places concretize those places. If the friends occupy the space of a "globe," then Percival demarcates the boundaries of this interior space. His departure for India is both a kind of "center" and a set of boundaries for the friends' space.

When Percival goes to India, Bernard imagines traveling with him, projecting a fantasy about Percival's position in colonial India. Woolf's parodic language implicitly criticizes the English perception and treatment of imperial space:

> "I see India," said Bernard. "I see the low, long shore; I see the tortuous lanes of stamped mud that lead in and out among ramshackle pagodas; I see the gilt and crenellated buildings which have an air of fragility and decay as if they were temporarily run up buildings in some Oriental exhibition…But now, behold,

> Percival advances; Percival rides a flea-bitten mare, and wears a sun-helmet. By applying the standards of the West, by using the violent language that is natural to him, the bullock-cart is righted in less than five minutes. The Oriental problem is solved. He rides on; the multitude cluster round him, regarding him as if he were—what indeed he is—a God" (135-6).

Bernard's language is so exaggerated as to be parodic; he imagines India's buildings are temporary like in "some Oriental exhibition." As Koenigsberger has shown, Woolf was deeply skeptical of the empire exhibitions at Wembley that she visited in 1924, finding the exhibition's claim to realism to be absurd. Bernard's choice of the term "Oriental exhibition" suggests the flimsiness of his perception, drawing India as a kind of exhibition, a fictional space where Percival's role is aggrandized. By the end of the passage, Bernard thinks of Percival as "what indeed he is—a God." And yet Bernard's language is also implicitly critical of the colonial mission. He describes the language and "standards of the West" as "violent"; he finds the treatment of India as an "Oriental problem" both reductive and dismissive, as Percival's imagined heroism in righting the bullock-cart indicates. India's problem, in the passage above, is no more than a cart tipped over in a ditch, and Percival is able to solve the whole "Oriental problem" and become "a God" merely by righting the cart.

While Bernard's imagined engagement with India is reductive, the novel is also critical of those who refuse to engage with Britain's colonial web altogether. When the friends are at a party, they engage in political conversation about Britain's empire, in which the other party guests use private spaces as a way to shut out the world completely:

> What is to be done about India, Ireland, or Morocco? Old gentlemen answer the question standing decorated under chandeliers…Outside the undifferentiated

> forces roar; inside we are very private, very explicit, have a sense indeed, that it is here, in this little room, that we make whatever day of the week it may be (255).

In this passage, Bernard remarks on the desire for imperial solidity, a desire for the "inside" (of rooms, of people, of England) to be stable, and the outside, the "undifferentiated forces" to settle. The "old gentlemen" who debate colonial questions are removed from the spaces they discuss, fabricating these colonial outposts as much as they "make whatever day of the week it may be" on the "inside." They construct India, Ireland, and Morocco, and this kind of construction represents the insularity that Woolf's work critiques, even when it is ostensibly focused on interiority. To "answer the question" or "solve" the "Oriental problem" from the isolation of chandeliered rooms or through one's Orientalist imaginings is implicitly (and historically, actually) an act of violence. Bernard explains the temptation of rejecting the "undifferentiated forces" of the world outside his private spaces but concedes that rejecting the outside world for a life of order becomes "a convenience, a lie" (255).

The friends' relationship with empire vis-à-vis Percival provokes them to reorient themselves to the spaces they occupy. I mean "reorient" in Sara Ahmed's sense of the term, that their encounter with unfamiliar spaces forces them to reconsider their orientation in England and toward India.[86] Percival's death makes it difficult for the friends to disregard the "undifferentiated forces" outside of their own space. Percival's absence provokes them to look outside in two senses: outside the interior room that they share at the restaurant, and outside England in their imaginative journeys to India. After Percival dies, the spatial relations between the friends shift. Percival's absence in the novel is represented by the perpetually-opening door, whose movements make the friends ask: "Is it Percival? No; it is not Percival.' …I have seen the door open and shut twenty times already; each time the suspense sharpens" (118). Neville

[86] In the sense of the cardinal directions as well as its etymological relation to the "Orient."

laments, "The door will not open; he will not come" (211). The friends' collective consciousness and collective space is shaped in relation to what is outside of it. At first, the outside is the world outside the nursery; later, the outside is the British Empire, figured by Percival, who is both outside of the circle and at its center. Percival's fatal encounter in India reorients the characters' personal spaces, gesturing to the space outside their English rooms and destabilizing the space inside. His absence is both perceived and represented spatially.[87] Percival's absence fragments the space that the six remaining friends occupy and after his death, their anxiety about their personal space (and personal narratives) increases: Susan frets about her childhood spaces (190), Jinny about rearranging her rooms (195), and Neville about whether or not he needs a room (196). Percival's death, around which the novel both figuratively and literally "centers," is an example of the intrusion of outside forces into the protected private spheres of home and consciousness, which were, of course, never entirely protected at all.[88]

Throughout the novel, the spatial relationship between the friends signals a spatial relationship between England and its colonies, in which the relationship between the six minds under one roof is also a relationship between many countries under imperial rule. I read Bernard's commentary on himself as simultaneously a response to empire. When Bernard insists, "I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am…or how to distinguish my life from theirs," he signals the troubled relationship between "interior" and "exterior" that defines the

[87] Percival's death, the absence in the middle of the novel and in the middle of the group of friends, is figured by spatial metaphors reminiscent of the absence of Jacob in *Jacob's Room*. Like Jacob's absence, Percival's death is represented by the perpetually opening door without his figure striding into the room, or the empty chairs and corners that he will never occupy. Neville thinks, "Barns and summer days in the country, rooms where we sat—all now lies in the unreal world which is gone. My past is cut from me" (151). The actual spaces of their childhood—barns and rooms—are "gone" to Neville, changed beyond recognition.

[88] See also the scene in *To the Lighthouse* in which the interior space of the dining room distorts the world outside: "Now all the candles were lit up, and the faces on both sides of the table were brought nearer by the candle light, and composed, as they had not been in the twilight, into a party round a table, for the night was now shut off by panes of glass, which, far from giving any accurate view of the outside world, rippled it so strangely that here, inside the room, seemed to be order and dry land; there, outside, a reflection in which things waved and vanished, waterily" (76).

novel's approach to empire (276). Describing a dinner with his friends in a restaurant, Bernard says, "we felt enlarge itself round us the huge blackness of what is outside us, of what we are not" (277). I want to argue that this passage can be read as commentary on character—i.e. that "what we are not" signifies "*who* we are not." Bernard is "many people" insofar as Woolf claimed the novel's "six characters were supposed to be one," so what is "outside" him is also the other five characters.[89] However, we can also read this passage as a commentary on empire, in which the "huge blackness of what is outside us, of what we are not" describes "*where* we are not," including "India, Ireland, or Morocco," the "outside" that persistently troubles the text's representation of Englishness. When Neville remarks that he is changed by the presence of a friend in the room, I also see a relationship between England and its colonial territories:

> How curiously one is changed by the addition, even at a distance, of a friend…how painful to be recalled, to be mitigated, to have one's self adulterated, mixed up, become part of another. As he [Bernard] approaches I become not myself but Neville mixed with somebody (83).

If Neville changes, becomes "mitigated…mixed up…part of another" when Bernard approaches, we also see how England, too, becomes "part of another" when is "changed by the addition, even at a distance" of its colonies. Englishness also becomes "adulterated…part of another" when it shares territory with its colonial outposts. Percival's travels to India and the novel's other commentary on empire reinforce this reading. For instance, Louis says, "The maps of our successful undertakings confront us on the wall. We have laced the world together without ships" (200) and Rhoda imagines herself as a figure of empire: "The diamonds of the Imperial crown blaze on my forehead" (56). In these moments, the novel's language about space seems designed to be read doubly, as both a commentary on personal identity and a commentary on

[89] See Virginia Woolf's *Letters*, Vol. 4; 27 Oct 1931 to G.L. Dickinson p 397

national identity. Even Bernard reads the space of the restaurant at the novel's end as a sign of empire: the "opening, shutting; shutting, opening…to expand, to contract" all seems to be a "message" that Bernard might "assume command of the British Empire" (261). In these (admittedly somewhat strange) figurative passages, the instability of the room in relation to the expansive world outside signals the interior room's relationship with empire, like in Bernard's fantasy that he should "assume command" of the empire. In these moments, Bernard's desire for Louis to "roof us all in" with his "red ink, with his very fine nib" (282) suggests how the novel views narrative and representation as one possible response to the unsettling of empire. If Bernard is the novel's storyteller, then his stories become a way to stabilize, to put a roof on—however briefly or uncertainty—the flow and instability of the characters' lives.[90] The next section examines how Woolf uses narrative as a provisional response to the unsettled "waves" of empire and personality that destabilize the spatial relationship between rooms and homes.

"Nothing settled or stayed unbroken": Woolf's unsettled narrative spaces

When she was drafting *The Waves*, Woolf expressed anxiety about the balance between stability and fluctuation in the novel. She wrote that she aimed to give a "sense of continuity, instead of which most people say, no you've given the sense of flowing and passing away and that nothing matters. Yet I feel things matter quite immensely."[91] Woolf's desire to balance

[90] For example, Bernard's desire to locate stability in personality: "we assemble different forms, make different patterns. But if I do not nail these impression to the board…than I shall fall like snow and be wasted" (170).
[91] The full passage, in a letter to Ethel Smyth, is as follows: " The six characters were supposed to be one. I'm getting old myself—I shall be fifty next year; and I come to feel more and more how difficult it is to collect oneself into one Virginia…Therefore I wanted to give the sense of continuity, instead of which most people say, no you've given the sense of flowing and passing away and that nothing matters. Yet I feel things matter quite immensely" (*L* 4, 397). Virginia Woolf's *Letters*, Vol. 4; 27 Oct 1931 to G.L. Dickinson p 397.

"flow" and "solidity" was a preoccupation of much of her work.[92] I want to argue that *The Waves* uses rooms as a structuring device that give the "sense of continuity" along with the "sense of flowing and passing" that her stream of consciousness narration emphasizes. Woolf criticized the Edwardian rooms she saw as too closed, bounded, or fixed, yet Woolf's rooms often express a longing for lost stability. For Bernard, the room offers the illusion of stability even as it demands attention to change. This section examines Woolf's narrative form as a response to the unsettled space of the room (and through the room, the home), primarily through her use of stream of consciousness. I focus on how a subject's sense of him or herself is constructed in relation to the particular room he or she occupies. While this section moves "inward" from unsettled imperial territories to focus on unsettled psychological territories, I see Woolf's construction of individual subjectivity as part of a larger narrative on the construction of citizenship. In *The Waves*, subjectivity has political resonance because the shared space of the six friends also works as a metaphor for the shared space of the British colonies. The world "external" to the friends' rooms alters their interiority; the world "external" to England's national space also alters its interiority. Through characters like Percival, who travel to India, the external world expands the friends' consciousness as well as their sense of Englishness. The text's focus on draftiness, in rooms, writing, and subjectivity, critiques claims of superior knowledge or omniscience that so often underpinned the ideology of colonial enterprises.[93]

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[92] See, for instance, Lily Briscoe's repeated anxiety about "holding things still" in her painting, as well as a series of Woolf's essays including "Modern Fiction" in which she discusses the relationship between a text's solid construction and the "myriad impressions" that threaten to destabilize it.

[93] See also the representation of Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, where Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness is shaped in relation to the house. Sitting in the living room, Mrs. Ramsay perceives that "[e]very door was left open. She listened. The drawing-room door was open; the hall door was open; it sounded as if the bedroom doors were open; and certainly the window on the landing was open, for that she had opened herself" (31). Mrs. Ramsay believes that she can sense what windows are open and where drafts are blowing. Yet the novel vindicates these odd moments when she turns out to be right about the open windows, or when she does seem to predict the Rayleys' marriage.

In much of Woolf's work, consciousness is described in terms of interior space, in which characters' senses of belonging are altered by the rooms they inhabit.[94] In novels as early as *Jacob's Room*, the consciousness of Woolf's characters fluctuates depending on the room they inhabit. Watching a party from his window, Jacob sees: "Every time the door opened and fresh people came in, those already in the room shifted slightly" (150). "Shifted" has two resonances as Jacob watches the party: the change in one's bodily position, and a change in emphasis or focus. The people in the room physically shift, moving their feet or looking over their shoulders; they also figuratively shift, their moods and minds changing depending on who enters or leaves the party. The novel foregrounds variations, gaps, and emptiness in many of its spaces: the space of Jacob's empty room, the space of Britain's empire and the war it describes, the space of the novel (the novel as a space), and the space on the page.[95] In an essay on the spacing of *Jacob's Room*, Edward Bishop points out that the first edition of Woolf's novel contains line breaks between sections that perform the gaps and absences in the other spaces of the novel.[96] Early in the novel, a description of a ride on the omnibus works as a reminder of how little we know people around us. On the bus, "[e]ach had his own business to think of. Each had his past shut in

[94] For readings of consciousness in Woolf's fiction, see works by Elizabeth Abel, Emily Dalgarno, and Tamlyn Monson.

[95] Unsettled objects within rooms also signal the unsettled consciousnesses of the room's occupants. The novel twice describes Jacob's empty room in identical language: "Listless is the air in an empty room, just swelling the curtain; the flowers in the jar shift. One fibre in the wicker armchair creaks, though no one sits there" (48, 247). In the first instance, the room is only empty because Jacob is elsewhere, but the line presages the end of the novel, when Jacob's mother and Bonamy visit his room after his death. The first iteration suggests how little we know of Jacob even when he is living. The description of the books he reads and the flowers left on his table offer an incomplete view of the room's inhabitant, as others have noted.

[96] In *Jacob's Room*, the contents of a room offer necessarily incomplete insight into the room's occupant. Jacob's own room is the obvious example. Along with the other characters' recollections of Jacob, the objects in his room are offered as a means to understanding who Jacob is. Famously, the novel claims, "It is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done" (214). Recollections of Jacob and descriptions of his empty rooms both provide an incomplete view of the person, and the novel foregrounds the absences in our knowledge of Jacob as much as it offers insight into his consciousness. Bishop reads this spatial construction of the text as a way the narrative signals its movement in and out of the past, gaps in memory, or unanswered questions. The spacing/space of the novel performs the space in the novel, amplifying the absences and gaps in the interior space of Jacob's room itself. Such gaps also reflect the reader's (and other characters') gaps in knowledge about Jacob. The novel shows the fragmentation of war through Jacob's private spaces, as it simultaneously performs the fragmentation of war through its use of spatial forms.

him like the leaves of a book known to him by heart; and his friends could only read the title, James Spalding, or Charles Budgeon, and the passengers going the opposite way could read nothing at all" (85). A person's past is a kind of closed book, whose words are only partially available to the people around him. The omnibus incident draws a parallel between the absences of knowledge within a book and within a person. The novel as a whole foregrounds gaps in knowledge; the metaphor of the omnibus rider as a book amplifies the argument that our knowledge, of books and of other people, is incomplete.[97]

In *The Waves*, rooms are a metaphor for the mind, for both its capaciousness and its containment. The room—as an arrangement of subjectivity, a figurative trope, and a material connection to the outside world—is Woolf's answer to modernism's challenges of narrating interiority, squaring personal experience with exterior changes, and measuring material change. For Bernard, a room, like a story, is both contained and expansive. The walls demarcate the boundaries of a room, even as windows and doors connect the room to the world outside. The covers demarcate the boundaries of a novel even when the novel provokes conversation within and about life outside it. Bernard approaches the challenge of representing psychological interiority by turning to the ways in which interior spaces and the exterior spaces (open doors, London streets, and India) affect characters' consciousness and identity. In *The Waves*, Woolf uses the opening door as a metaphor for Percival's absence, but also for personal and political openness in the characters' lives. The open door tacitly signals how outside forces—among them colonial India, new lovers and friends, the streets of London—enter into the rooms and lives of

[97] Rachel Hollander argues that *Jacob's Room* emphasizes the impossibility of complete identification with, or knowledge of, the other even as it stresses the importance of imaginative identification with the other. Hollander argues that the novel suggests it is an ethical failure to not try to imagine the other and such a failure is implicated with war (it is easier to kill if one neglects the attempt at sympathetic identification). Tammy Clewell argues that while the novel is elegiac in some ways, it is also a response to the traumas of World War I. As a "gendered rebellion," Woolf's texts refuse the consolation or closure typical of mourning. Instead, her novels refuse to mourn, refusing consolation and thus forcing the war and its concomitant losses to continue to be remembered. Clewell argues that such absences, particularly Jacob's, work as a reminder of loss.

the friends. Jinny describes growing up as a process of experiencing what is outside of the nursery: "Outside the trees flower; outside the women linger; outside the cabs swerve and sweep. Emerged from the tentative ways, the obscurities and dazzle of youth, we look straight in front of us, ready for what may come (the door opens, the door keeps on opening)" (141). The door that "keeps on opening" figures the friends' experiences in the world outside the contained private nursery. Jinny's description of their adulthood unfolding amplifies Neville's lamentation of being "walled in" and thus isolated from Percival's life and death in India. If childhood is a "walled in" space, then their adulthood is the process of recognizing the expansive spaces outside (whether outside is India or the bustle of London). As Jinny describes it, emerging from the "obscurities" of youth is a process of spatial expansiveness, a series of opening doors. The doors, a feature of childhood rooms, begin to open as the characters' perceptions of the world expand. In adulthood, "The door goes on opening. The room fills and fills with knowledge, anguish, many kinds of ambition, much indifference, some despair" (175). When the door "goes on opening," it brings with it the violence and uncertainty of the outside world.

Consciousness is a matter of both dispersal and collection, and the tension between the two helps to explain the relation between the six or seven principal characters in *The Waves*.[98] Woolf conceived of consciousness like a room: a metaphorical space that it is loosely bounded but produced in relation to the world that surrounds it. The novel repeatedly shows that space and place are products of social relations, and these relations are in flux. Even as the characters look to rooms to provide them with a sense of stability, these rooms, like the characters, change

[98] See footnote 91 for the full quote from her letter to Ethel Smyth, in which she complains that it is "difficult…to collect oneself into one Virginia" as she gets older. In *The Waves*, Woolf literalizes her sense that she cannot "collect [her]self into one Virginia" by making one character into six different but connected minds. Woolf's anxiety was that others would focus too much on the dispersal of the self at the expense of the work of collecting the self, even if that collection is fleeting, incomplete, or elusive. In her texts, an individual mind may give the "sense of continuity" even as it is also "flowing and passing" and seeming to disperse.

from moment to moment as people enter and exit, light and shade move on the walls, or objects shift slightly. Rhoda describes the nursery as both solid and shifting: "That is the corner of the cupboard; that is the nursery looking-glass. But they stretch, they elongate" (27). A cupboard might be stable from one angle, but if several people are looking at the same cupboard from multiple angles, in a novel that represents the different sides of a single mind, the representation of the cupboard's space stretches and elongates, as Rhoda describes. Later in the novel, Rhoda again wishes for structure in her space, attempting to stabilize the change around her through her representation of the room the friends share: "This is our dwelling-place. The structure is now visible. Very little is left outside" (228). Though close to one another, the friends are increasingly separated as they grow older and no longer share the nursery. Bernard characterizes the difficulty of accessing his friends' private minds when he acknowledges that, "stories that follow people into their private rooms are difficult" (51). *The Waves* is a series of stories that enter into the private rooms, the intimate psychic space, of each of its characters. As Bernard visits his friends—and describes the development of each of them—he travels literally and metaphorically from one room to another in the "house" of the novel and the houses of his friends.

In *The Waves*, the six characters often feel unsettled or disoriented because of changes within their personal spaces. The novel shows how characters locate their desire for stability in their rooms, yet these rooms repeatedly deny their occupants the stability they seek there. Bernard describes his struggle to identify himself as a matter of the room he occupies at the moment:

> Who am I? I ask. This? No, I am that. Especially now, when I have left a room, and people talking, and the stone flags ring out with my solitary footsteps and I behold the moon rising, sublimely, indifferently, over the ancient chapel—then it

> becomes clear that I am not one and simple, but complex and many. Bernard in public, bubbles; in private, is secretive […] They do not understand that I have to effect different transitions; have to cover the entrances and exists of several different men who alternately act their parts as Bernard (76).

In his attempt to locate himself—"Who am I? I ask"—Bernard turns toward his rooms to find an answer. Yet rooms deny him the stability he seeks there, when he realizes that after leaving a room, he finds that he is "not one and simple, but complex and many." Though he tries to "pin [him]self down most firmly," such stability is impossible, in both rooms and personality (260). Instead, Bernard discovers only that "There are many rooms—many Bernards" (260). Bernard reads himself as "several different men who alternately act their parts as Bernard," based seemingly on the different rooms that Bernard inhabits (76). If in public, Bernard "bubbles" and in private, he feels "secretive," then his fluctuating sense of himself is a result of the rooms he occupies. Early in the novel, as he remembers the events of the day and the places he visited, Bernard wonders, "which of these people am I? It depends so much upon the room" (81). He understands his consciousness as a function of rooms, the objects within them, and the people with whom he shares the space. He is one person in the nursery, and another in the streets of London. He describes himself as "imaginative, subtle" when he walks in the afternoon; he is "dramatic" after dinner; his identity depends on the time of day, where and with whom he is. As he grows older, Bernard's question "which of these people am I?" becomes a more conclusive statement: "There are many rooms—many Bernards. There was the charming, but weak; the strong, but supercilious…the shabby, but—go into the next room—the foppish, worldly, and too well dressed" (260). As he travels through different spaces—even the rooms of the same house—certain aspects of his personality are accentuated. When he occupies a bedroom, he is

one Bernard; when he visits a restaurant, he is another. The structure of the sentence itself suggests the parallel senses of shaping and being shaped by a room: "many rooms—many Bernards." When he enters a room, Bernard observes, "certain rearrangements took place." The passive phrasing "took place" leaves it unclear whether Bernard's presence changes the room or whether the room itself changes Bernard. The space of the room is shifting, subtle, and uncertain; Bernard's sense of himself shifts, as well.

In *The Waves*, the struggle to narrate the world through various perspectives is described in the figurative terms of moving through different rooms. Notably, neither Woolf's "collective consciousness" narrative style nor Bernard operate from a position of omniscience, as Bernard admits when he says, "it is the panorama of life, seen not from the roof, but from the third story window that delights me" (242).[99] The third story window is metaphorical for third person, of course, the perspective in which the novel is set. The roof, a narrative position of omniscience, offers the viewer a complete view of his surroundings. In contrast, the third story window gives an elevated but incomplete view. The collective consciousness of Woolf's fiction certainly has a view from above (for example, even though Bernard is a single person, he inhabits something like a third-person viewpoint), but it remains riddled with the holes and unanswered questions that come from a ground-level narration. Though Bernard may not make a "perfect phrase," one that is finished and true, the work of a writer is the experience of seeing the "passing moment" from a wide variety of angles, from being in "more rooms, more different rooms" than the ordinary observer.

The "more different rooms" that Bernard shares with his friends show the fluctuations of his sense of self. In *For Space*, Massey posits that, "If time unfolds as change then space unfolds

[99] On Woolf's use of "collective consciousness," see Lorraine Sim's *Virginia Woolf and the Patterns of Ordinary Experience*, Pamela Transue's *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Style*, *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, and Pamela Caughie's *Virginia Woolf in the age of mechanical reproduction*.

as interaction. In that sense space is the *social* dimension" (61). Space "unfolds" through the changes engendered by social interaction. In *The Waves*, the changes to the friends' lives are marked through the changes to the friends' space. Their social interactions are constructed in and through rooms. The fluctuations in characters' consciousnesses are often a result of what room the character occupies and with whom s/he shares the space. The identities of the six characters change in relation to their shared—and individual—rooms.[100] The beginning of the novel suggests that the children have a collective consciousness when they complete each other's sentences and repeat each other's phrases. Toward the end of the novel, however, their identities become more discrete as the rooms they occupy are increasingly separate. When Jinny meets Neville in his rooms, Neville thinks, "to sit with you, alone with you, here in London, in this firelit room, you there, I here, is all…I think those are books against the wall, and that a curtain, and that perhaps an arm-chair. But when you come everything changes. The cups and saucers changed when you came in this morning" (177-8). Neville's room is both all-encompassing ("this firelit room, you there, I here, is *all*") and in flux ("everything changes"). The room provides stability and comfort, but it is also a space that changes when Jinny comes and goes. Neville's experience of the objects in the room shifts when Jinny shares the space with him; he perceives the objects to have changed.

The conversations in the shared space of the children's nursery show how the children share consciousness because they share space. For instance, the varying viewpoints on a phrase about Bernard creating stories like "bubbles" show the children's collective consciousness. In the first chapter of the novel, Jinny says, "Bubbles form on the floor of the saucepan" (11), a

[100] As David Herman argues, mind and world are on a continuum. The mind is produced in relation to the external world, and the external world also shapes the mind's perception of reality. For Herman, some studies of modernism falsely see the mind as "separated from external, material reality" rather than seeing the mind produced in relation to external, material reality and vice versa (250).

metaphor without a clear referent. But soon after, Susan's comments begin to build on Jinny's. Susan notices that when Bernard speaks, "up they bubble" (38). Bernard, too, repeats the phrasing and refracts it again: "let me talk. The bubbles are rising like silver bubbles from the floor of a saucepan; image on top of image" (49). It is not until significantly later that the image crystallizes, when Bernard asks, "What are stories? Toys I twist, bubbles I blow…That is, I am a natural coiner of words, a blower of bubbles" (144-5). Each moment of narration has meaning, but in combination, they alter and deepen each other. The bubbles are themselves kinds of rooms, separate but porous (like Mrs. Ramsay's walls in *To The Lighthouse*), echoing the transparent thresholds between chapters of a story or rooms of a house. Taken together, the chapters in a novel deepen one other's meaning; and together, the separate characters' consciousnesses deepen the collective representation of the mind. Separately, their phrases are unfinished; together, they offer greater (though not complete) coherence. The series of bubbles, or images, that Bernard produces does not offer narrative coherence. Instead, what comes to boil is a sequence of images, unstable bubble-like images that rise in proximity to other bubbles. The children's movement from a shared private room creates changes in their consciousness and in the novel's representation of their consciousness. As the children grow up and disperse into separate physical spaces, the single narrative voice also divides into more discrete voices.

In contrast to the collective consciousness the friends seem to share as children, the later chapters of the novel show the minds developing individually, as well as collectively. The departure of the children to sex-segregated schools is partly what fuels the increasing distance between the narrative voices, and the separation of male and female voices in the novel. The children's boarding schools are what Foucault might call heterotopias, segregated spaces that

solidify—or even produce—gender difference.[101] In Woolf's autobiographical essay, "A Sketch of the Past," she describes how the nursery she shared with her siblings as a child led to a sense of collective identity. Only when the children moved into their own individual rooms did they begin to get a sense of themselves as separate. She writes, "By the time I had that room, when I was fifteen that is, 'we four'—'us four' as we called ourselves—had become separate. That was symbolized by our separate rooms" (107). Like the characters in *The Waves*, Woolf and her siblings were "us four" in a shared space and became "separate" once they occupied separate rooms. The narration of *The Waves* also expands as the characters grow older and more distinct. Early in the novel, the six characters repeat each other's phrases and observations. After leaving for school and entering adulthood, the voices of the individual figures become increasingly discrete, until Bernard, the appointed narrator of the book, is the primary voice at the end of the text.

As a writer of and within the novel, Bernard uses the room as a metaphor for storytelling because it has the capacity to accommodate flux.[102] Bernard is drawn to the stories that follow people into their private rooms, but he is also aware of the impossibility of representing either the interior space of one's bedroom or of one's mind completely. Bernard himself concedes, "I shall never succeed, even in talk, in making a perfect phrase. But I shall have contributed more to the passing moment than any of you; I shall go into more rooms, more different rooms, than any

[101] See Foucault, "Of Other Spaces." In some ways, the novel reads gender difference as the production of gendered spaces, not so different from the way Woolf imagined the construction of gender in *Orlando*, in which Orlando's clothing and his/her travels to Turkey facilitate his/her outward change from male to female. Orlando's relationship to her house throughout the novel reflects how differently men and women perceive and occupy the same spaces. In the first half of the novel, Orlando the man takes little notice of his house and his ownership of it. When Orlando becomes a woman in the latter half of the novel, she no longer has the rights to her own estate and approaches the space far differently than she did as a man. Orlando's legal relation to her estate changes her experience of the space-she no longer occupies it with the same sense of ownership.

[102] As Massey describes it, space is constituted by interrelations and interactions. Rather than seeing space as the static subordinate to time, Massey argues for seeing space as a sphere of "constantly becoming" and a sphere of interaction (11).

of you" (134). If Bernard's phrases are imperfect, it is because the act of representing the interior room and interior mind is a necessarily impossible task. This is in part because the room itself is perpetually unsettled, not only by the people moving in and out, but also by the light changing on the walls: "All for a moment wavered and bent in uncertainty and ambiguity, as if a great moth sailing through the room had shadowed the immense solidity of chairs and tables with floating wings" (183). Nevertheless, the way to contribute to the "passing moment" as a writer is to see it from "different rooms," to see it or to write it from many angles.

Woolf famously struggled with how to begin and end her stories, and her novels themselves remark upon the artificiality of beginnings and endings.[103] In fact, in a letter to Ethel Smyth, Woolf wrote that when she finished a book, she felt she was "fluttering like a leaf in a gale or in some corridor or antechamber, outside life, outside the room; all because I've finished a book" (291). Finishing a book is like being "outside the room" or otherwise "outside life." In *The Waves*, she applies this image again when Bernard compares leaving a room to leaving life. At the close of *The Waves*, the friends return to shared space, this time a restaurant rather than a nursery. In this shared space, Bernard describes their shared lives as a shared consciousness: "I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am—Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs" (276). Bernard's identity is caught up with that of his friends; he struggles to locate what separates them, asking "Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct?" (288). If, as Bernard has claimed earlier, he fills his mind "with the contents of [a] room," at the restaurant, that content is his friends. Sitting around one table, sharing food and drink, the friends feel "enlarge itself round us the huge blackness of what is outside us, of what we are not" (277). The "blackness" of the outside world threatens the friends' enclosure but it also reinforces the interior space they occupy, reaffirming what they are by

[103] In Quentin Bell's biography of Woolf, he notes, "the end of a novel always gave her great trouble" (123).

reminding them of what they are not. Their collective identity is a result both of proximity and of Percival's absence, another kind of "huge blackness" whose otherness (both as death and the colonial encounter) brings what is inside closer together.[104]

Throughout the novel, storytelling has been a way to establish order. When they are children, Neville insists that Bernard can "describe what we have all seen so that it becomes a sequence. Bernard says there is always a story. I am a story. Louis is a story" (37). Neville insists on using storytelling to provide a structuring "sequence," to make the story of Louis or the story of Neville into something tidy. At the end of the novel, Bernard reflects on how stories artificially impose endings and beginnings: "But if there are no stories, what end can there be, or what beginning? Life is not susceptible perhaps to the treatment we give it when we try to tell it" (267). In *The Waves,* Bernard's approach to beginnings and endings is rooted in the relationship between stories and space. *The Waves* uses the room as a way to understand beginnings and endings, where a beginning is a room before it is occupied, and an ending is the room after its occupants leave. As the novel is ending, Bernard reflects that "In the beginning, there was the nursery, with windows opening on to a garden, and beyond that the sea" (239). Echoing the famous opening verse of the Gospel of John, Bernard describes the shared space of the nursery as the location of their youth, and as the start of their stories. The novel (and Bernard's life) ends when the restaurant the friends are is sitting in closes for the evening. As Bernard leaves the restaurant, and figuratively the world of the living, the reader exits the space of the novel.

If we read the room as a structuring device for the representation of consciousness and for storytelling itself, then the closing image of the cleared-out restaurant describes the loss of the friends' communal space, of their communal consciousness, and of the narrative that follows

[104] We can also read the "blackness" as the unknown space of British colonies, which despite being "outside us" nevertheless impacts the experience of the space inside.

and describes their experience. The end of *The Waves*, like "Time Passes," represents death as the moment when a character is absent from personal and public spaces. Leaving Neville's rooms, Bernard remembers Percival suddenly: "how they caught me as I left the room, the fangs of that old pain!" The memory of his friend is joined by a lamentation that "he was not there. The place was empty. It is strange how the dead leap out on us at street corners, or in dreams" (274). Neville's doorway evokes Percival's absence, and on the street, Bernard's memory of Percival is summoned by an empty place. In his old age, Bernard's consciousness is increasingly shaped by the silence and emptiness around him. In the novel's final space, the emptying restaurant, the head waiter suggests that the staff "must put up the shutters, must fold the tablecloths," a hint which may as well apply to Bernard's mind: it is time for him to close up his mind and tidy his mental space in preparation to "be gone" to death.[105] The closing of the restaurant signals the closing of the narrative. Bernard lets go of his role as storyteller, as his "book, stuffed with papers, has dropped to the floor" (294).

Death is thus the closing of shared space and the closing of the narrative space. When the friends depart from the restaurant, separate from one another, the spaces they occupied are represented as absences and through absences: "empty coffee-cups. Here are chairs turned but nobody sits on them. Here are empty tables and nobody any more coming to dine at them tonight" (294). The restaurant empties out just as Bernard's mind empties. As he lets go of life, of the restaurant space, and of his role as storyteller, Bernard says, "I have done with phrases" (295), and praises the "solitude that has removed the pressure of the eye, the solicitation of the

[105] Bernard is anxious when the staff hints, "it is time to shut the shop and be gone" (295). Death is also oddly related to India at the end of the novel, where Bernard likens his journey toward death to Percival's travel to India: "It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back like a young man's, like Percival's, when he galloped in India. I strike spurs into my horse. Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!'" (297).

body, and all need of lies and phrases" (294). Both the space of the restaurant and the space of the narrative close their doors.

Conclusions

> "Now is life very solid, or very shifting? I am haunted by the two contradictions. This has gone on for ever: will last for ever; goes down to the bottom of the world—this moment I stand on. Also it is transitory, flying, diaphanous…I am impressed by the transitoriness of human life to such an extent that I am often saying a farewell."
> –Virginia Woolf, *A Moment's Liberty* Diary 4 January 1929, 257

Much of Woolf's work posits a tension between locatedness and disorientation. In her diary, she writes about the "contradiction" between her feelings that life is both "very solid" and "very shifting." In her personal history, Woolf saw the seeming solidity of her childhood home, of barriers between men and women's spaces, of England's national boundaries, of women's professional possibilities, of the boundaries between her servants and her private space give way. Her lament that life is "transitory, flying, diaphanous" suggests that she perceived modern life changing rapidly and destabilizing her sense of the world. Woolf's architectural method captures both her sense of the world as "transitory, flying" and her residual desire for solidity. To use Lyotard's language, Woolf experiences both the "shattering of belief" and the nostalgia for narrative cohesiveness in her representation of life through rooms.[106] Rooms represent an unfulfilled desire for stability in the flux of modern life, but Woolf uses the room as a multivalent metaphor to make sense of the fluctuations of circumambient awareness, of fiction, and of imperial expansion. Woolf uses the room as a metaphor for consciousness, or what she variously calls "human character," the "mind," the "interior," or the "myriad impressions" of

[106] See the Appendix to Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, 76.

life.[107] In "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown," Woolf argued that the modern novel would be able to reveal "the whole country, the whole society…through the astonishing vividness and reality of the characters" ("Bennett" 385).[108] Woolf looked to the representation of "character" to deal with larger issues about "the whole country, the whole society" and she often used rooms to get closer to questions of character. At the same time, Woolf grappled with the expansion and unsettling of "British space" through the metaphor of the mind. In Woolf's novels, changes within a room reflect changes in the home as a material location and a national ideology. The room captures the paradox of containment and expansiveness, helping us understand how Woolf both sought and rejected a stable space in her representation of interior consciousness, and Britain's national territory.

By reorienting attention to interior space in Woolf's work, I hope to contribute two insights to the field of criticism. First, while Woolf's oeuvre has inspired many references to her use of space, the room itself remains a curiously unexamined object in the criticism.[109] Yet the room is a crucial part of the narrative on Woolf's use of space. As a woman, Woolf was rooted in the home in a different way than her male contemporaries, as her remarks about December 1910 indicate. Though she had tremendous professional success outside the home, her essays and letters show that she experienced historical change foremost through her interior space. The importance of the room was not just material, as she contends in *A Room of One's Own*, but also

[107] I choose the term "consciousness" to mean the mind's conscious and unconscious perceptions of the world around the mind as well as the world in the mind. This term follows the work of David Herman, Michel Weber, and others. Weber concedes that in fields ranging from neurology to philosophy, there is still debate about what to term the processes of consciousness and that there is still not a very good defining term. For Weber, "to judge from a literature in which the most cited figure continues to be Descartes!" this is "a topic that still lies wide open to speculation" (38). A more poetic term for Woolf's work might be "psychological interiority," which takes into account her architectural resonance, but I will use "consciousness" primarily.

[108] "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" is a somewhat revised, more widely circulated, version of "Character in Fiction."

[109] Off-hand references to space in Woolf criticism are too numerous to list comprehensively. See for example, Ann Banfield, Tammy Clewell, or Laura Doyle. Anna Snaith's and Michael Whitworth's excellent volume, *Locating Woolf: The Politics of Space and Place*, focuses primarily on national, civic, and textual spaces. Morag Shiach's short essay on "London Rooms" questions whether it's possible to "read a political, an aesthetic or a historical project" into Woolf's representation of rooms at all.

psychic, and the thread between psychological space and material space plays out in nearly all of Woolf's novels. Interior spaces are often the sites where women, orphans, exiles, and immigrants navigate social identity and nationhood and they are the site where Woolf navigates questions of narrative style, consciousness, and character in the context of World War I and the growth and decline of the British empire. Secondly, I see the relationship between rooms and homes not as indicative but as formative of Woolf's criticism of empire. By presenting political and social change in the context of the room, Woolf destabilized interior space on behalf of larger arguments about territorial nationalism in which the boundaries of Englishness are renegotiated by imperial expansion and contraction, war, and globalization. Through her representation of the room as a constantly shifting space, Woolf destabilized what she saw as related ideological and metaphorical problems in the stable houses of Edwardian fiction.

Woolf's use of interior space as a structuring metaphor for her novels, their representations of consciousness, and her orientation to empire puts several factions of Woolf criticism in conversation. Although it would be impossible to neatly partition the large amount criticism on Woolf, especially given the overlaps between approaches, there seem to be at least three major trends: an examination of Woolf's (often implicit) ideological or political critiques, including Woolf as feminist, as anti-colonialist, ethicist, or as cosmopolitan; explorations of Woolf's formal techniques, including her relationship with impressionism, stream-of-consciousness, epiphanies, and modes of narration; and historical work that examines Woolf's relationship with the publishing industry, war, colonialism, and psychology.[110] An attention to interior space in Woolf's work productively draws these three streams of criticism together. The room is a slippery space for Woolf—it is material, ideological, and metaphorical all in one—but

[110] In the first camp, see for example Walkowitz, Benziman, or Rachel Hollander; in the second camp, see for example Erich Auerbach, Jane Goldman, or Gina Potts and Lisa Shahriari; in the third, see for example Levenback, Jean Dubino, Mark Hussey, or Natania Rosenfeld.

it gives her a method for representing the "two contradictions" of life as both solid and shifting. In *The Waves*, the room is both a tool for representing the fluctuations of consciousness and storytelling, and a reflection of material spaces in relation to historical and political conditions.

Woolf's ideological or political critiques vis-à-vis space are in some ways subtler than those of the other authors that this dissertation examines. Nevertheless, her work sets the stage for how interior space is an especially germane metaphor for twentieth-century fiction, especially for the navigation of identity, in personal and political ways. During her life, Woolf witnessed ruptures that persisted throughout the century, a century marked by war, shifting national boundaries, the contraction and collapse of empire, and enormous changes in technology and globalization that altered the fabric of everyday life. In the next chapter, I examine the disorienting effects of the Anglo-Irish War on the interior space of the Irish country house, on the characters that occupy it, and on the form of the novels. For these writers, as well for Woolf, the twentieth century is marked by the disorientation of rooms and through them, the disruption of life at home.

CHAPTER 2: "GOING TO PIECES": POLITICAL SPACE AND VIOLENT FORMS IN THE ANGLO-IRISH COUNTRY HOUSE

In 1970, Elizabeth Bowen reviewed the first major novel by a then-unknown Anglo-Irish author, J.G. Farrell.[111] His novel, *Troubles*, was the first in a series of texts that came to be known as the "Empire Trilogy," including *The Siege of Krishnapur* and *The Singapore Grip*.[112] Bowen had reason to be interested in *Troubles*: it bore striking resemblance to her 1929 novel, *The Last September*.[113] Though they were written forty years apart, the novels share plotlines and locations and both revise the conventions of the "Big House novel." Both are set in enormous decaying Anglo-Irish houses during the Irish War of Independence; they feature unsettled orphaned protagonists caught between sympathies for the Irish and the English; and the stories both culminate with fires that destroy the houses and leave the characters' futures unresolved. Although the authors wrote their novels at different moments of political upheaval in Ireland—Bowen published *The Last September* after the Troubles of the late teens and twenties, and Farrell published *Troubles* during the Troubles of the late sixties—both return to the site of the "Big House" to articulate the contested position of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland. This chapter examines these two "Big House" novels to argue that the rooms within Bowen's "big house" and Farrell's revisionary, parodic "big hotel" work to both create "home" and unsettle it for the Anglo-Irish. I argue that the interior space of the "Big House," once considered by its inhabitants

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[111] *Troubles* went on to win the lost Man-Booker Prize, but at the time, Farrell was deeply anxious about his own work and reputation. His letters and diaries express frequent expressed anxiety that critics and readers might mistake him for contemporaneous writer James T. Farrell, whom Farrell noted had been nicknamed "the Small Bore from the Mid-West" (Letters 122).

[112] His unfinished novel, *The Hill Station*, was apparently also intended as part of the series.

[113] The two authors met and discussed *Troubles* at a party; Farrell writes to Bridget O'Toole that he and Bowen "had a longish personal chat" in which she spoke of his novel warmly (210). Bowen also reviewed *Troubles* and Farrell wrote in a letter that her review pleased him because "she was the only person who noticed, or bothered to say, that I was trying to write about now as well as then" (*Letters* 217). Maud Ellmann argues that Farrell wrote *Troubles* "[i]n homage to *The Last September*" and Bowen in fact reviewed the novel for *Europa*, calling it "a major work made deceptive as to its size by apparent involvement with what is minor" (*Letters* 435n12).

a stable, safe haven, is suddenly and irrevocably implicated in colonial violence. Both novels depict the "Big House" as a space in which the illusion of security gives way to disorientation, as the houses are unsettled by political conflict and violence.

Despite the overt similarities in plot, the two novels vary widely in their style, tone, and approach to the "Big House," and this makes it difficult to compare them side-by-side.[114] In this chapter, I have taken Bowen as the predecessor, and largely examined Farrell's novel in response to *The Last September*. Though some critics see *Troubles* as an explicit revision of *The Last September*, Farrell himself claims not to have read *The Last September* until 1971, the year after he published *Troubles*. However, Farrell was clearly familiar with Bowen's work and would likely have recognized himself the similarities between the novels.[115] Reading these two novels together allows us to see how the Anglo-Irish approach to imperialism and Irish space, as understood through the symbolic "Big House," shifts over forty years. In this chapter, I explore to what degree each novel recognizes Ireland as a colonial possession and how the "Big House" reflects the evolving relationship between the Anglo-Irish and their sense of belonging at home in Ireland.

I argue that the characters experience "home" as a psychological and political territory through the rooms of the Big Houses. In both novels, the Big House is ostensibly a site of stability, even as decay and migration in the house inadvertently undermine the metaphorical connection between the house and ideological belonging in Ireland. Thus, even as the characters look to the Big House as a way to stabilize their understanding of Ireland and their place within

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[114] Only one article compares the two directly: Margaret Scanlan's "Rumors of War: Elizabeth Bowen's *The Last September* and J. G. Farrell's *Troubles*," which examines how both novels defer history through the consciousness of their central characters.

[115] Although Maud Ellmann sees a reference to Bowen in the opening of *Troubles*, it's unclear whether Farrell read *The Last September* before writing *Troubles*. In a diary entry dated 20 February 1971, after the publication of *Troubles*, he mentions finding *The Last September* at a hotel and writes about it as if he had not read it previously: "I have seized a splendid [book] by Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September*, set in Ireland at the time of *Troubles*…" (241).

it, changes within the house itself show that achieving such stability is impossible. This tension between rootedness and upheaval produces intense disorientation, a sense of being lost and having to reconfigure oneself to one's surroundings. In both novels, the Anglo-Irish must actively reorient themselves to home in the form of the Big House and their position in Ireland at large. In its material form, the home is disoriented as the houses fall into disrepair; in its metaphorical form, characters' national, personal, and political affiliations are thrown into disarray. The representation of the house as a disorienting and unstable space is mobilized on behalf of larger arguments about colonial politics in which Ireland's national space is increasingly disrupted and reshaped by the Irish War of Independence. The Big House reflects the divided affiliations of the Anglo-Irish, who identify as both Irish and English at the same time that they feel neither Irish nor English. Through their revision of the Big House genre, these novels reorient our attention to how interior spaces participate in political conflict, enable experimentation in narrative form, and shape interior subjective life. At stake is a renewed understanding of how the disorienting form of each novel is a response to the disorienting historical conditions in the Irish War of Independence. Both *The Last September* and *Troubles* show national belonging as a series of active reorientations that reverberate through the form of the novels, which are digressive, elusive, disoriented, and interrupted by news of colonial violence.

Building the Big House

I want to begin with a brief history of both the Anglo-Irish Big House and the Big House novel, which help illustrate what is at stake in Bowen's and Farrell's interpretations. Although some critics view homes and houses foremost as "shelters" from the world outside, the Big

House had never been isolated from political conflict.[116] The first big houses in Ireland were built as part of English plantations in the sixteenth century. The Protestant Ascendancy often exerted control over the financial, political, and social lives of the Irish through the plantations and land. These plantations were settled by English immigrants, and often they involved violently displacing of the Catholic Irish from their land by force as well as legal methods, including a series of Penal Laws that prohibited Catholics from owning land, holding office, or serving in the military. Underlying these laws was the attempt to encourage the Irish to convert to the Anglican Church of Ireland.[117] Land ownership remained central to political conflicts in Ireland through the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The Penal Laws, the Popery Act, the Act of Settlement, Land Wars, and Irish Land Acts all used land as a way to exert religious and political control over the Irish. Though controversy remains about the precise causes and effects of the potato famine, many scholars agree that land politics around tenant farming contributed to the Irish famine, which led to the death of about a million Irish.[118] At this time, Anglo-Irish "Big Houses" were both a symbolic and practical means of asserting British jurisdiction over Ireland, and during times of violent conflicts, the houses became what Guy Fehlmann has called "a landmark of English domination and a protection of English identity" and "an obnoxious symbol of English imperialism" (Genet 15-16). In the early twentieth century, Sinn Fein and the IRA were involved in violent uprisings in an attempt to rebel against British political control in Ireland, and the IRA and other resistance groups burned down many "Big Houses," especially in

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[116] For the former, see Julienne Hanson's *Decoding Homes and Houses* or Charles Rice's *The Emergence of the Interior: Architecture, Modernity, Domesticity*, for example. Even Malcolm Kelsall calls the Big House the site of "the good life" in European culture. For one of the standard readings of domestic space as political space, see Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction*.

[117] See Nicholas Canny, Colm Lennon, or Jacqueline Genet.

[118] See Cecil Woodham-Smith. See also Terry Eagleton, 15; John Kelly, 2; Susan Campbell Bartoletti, 1. Although Plantation was part of the underlying conditions that led to the famine, some Big Houses tried to behave generously, feeding starving peasants, sometimes in return for nothing but sometimes in return for conversion to Protestantism.

Northern Ireland where conflicts were particularly intense.[119] Although proportionally few houses were destroyed during the war, the Big Houses "signified, and what they signified had to be destroyed" (Kelsall 5).

Today, popular representations of the British and Irish country house have more or less expunged the house of its violent political history. The country house has been resurrected "as the cultural idea that underlies what is now called 'the heritage industry'" (Kelsall 167). Shows like *Downton Abbey* and *The Edwardian Country House* and popular guidebooks like Mark Girouard's *A Country House Companion* regard the house with nostalgia and fondness, rarely dwelling on its contentious political history.[120] Until recently, the critical narrative about the "Big House" also foregrounded the genre's nostalgic tendencies.[121] Even today, many popular historical materials treat the Big House and the Protestant Ascendency reverentially.[122] These texts reflect a larger cultural desire to extract the domestic interior from participation in political conflict. These reverential popular representations are an extension of the "Big House novel" genre, in which the Big House is a relatively stable site of Anglo-Irish belonging.

In 1919-1921, when both Bowen and Farrell set their novels, the symbolic logic of the Big House was in flux. The house was not merely a material referent for the historical past; it was actively part of political violence and resistance during the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War.[123] In the early 1920's, life in the 'Big House" was more explicitly political and potentially violent than it had been previously. In *The Last September* and *Troubles*, the

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[119] See Kelsall 5.
[120] See also novels like *The House at Tyneford* and even Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, for which he later apologized for having filled it "with a kind of gluttony, for food and wine, for the splendours of the recent past, and for rhetorical and ornamental language, which now with a full stomach I find distasteful" (preface to 1959 re-issue). For early apolitical criticism, see for example Otto Rauchbauer.
[121] See especially Jacqueline Genet or Vera Kreilkamp.
[122] See, for example, Valerie and Thomas Pakenham, Mark Bence-Jones, Desmond Fitzgerald, Sean O'Reilly, David Hicks, Tarquin Blake, and the website that characterizes Big House as "magnificent" and built in the "Golden Age" of the Ascendency: http://www.irelandforvisitors.com/articles/greathouses.htm
[123] See Claire Norris, p. 117.

disorientation caused by war is represented multiply: through the rooms of the houses; in the characters' subjective experience of living in the houses; and through interruptions and disorientation in the narrative form and use of genre.[124]

Bowen and Farrell both self-consciously revise the category of the "Big House novel" and its relative, gothic fiction, in which political conflict is subordinate to personal dynamics.[125] The Big House novel is characterized by its focus on human relationships within the house to the exclusion of the world outside. Although houses are central to both Big House novels and gothic fiction, the politics behind land ownership are often euphemized or set in the background. The conventions of the genre include a family line whose decay parallels the decay of the house; an alienated or dying landlord; and the figure of a Catholic outsider who threatens to usurp control of the big house and wrest it from its Protestant heirs, often through marriage.[126] A history of the Irish Big House novel generally begins with Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, which tells the story of the decline of the Irish House of Rackrent from the unreliable perspective of Thady Quirk, a house servant. *Castle Rackrent* was published in 1800, the same year the Act of Union officially brought Ireland under Great Britain's colonial rule. At the time, Edgeworth's representation of the "Big House" symbolized widespread anxiety about the strength of the

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[124] My use of the term "disorientation" draws on Ahmed's examination of orientation in *Queer Phenomenology*. Orientation, Ahmed argues, is often assumed rather than explicitly noticed. When you walk around your own neighborhood, for example, you are less often focusing consciously on your orientation and surrounding; you assume knowledge of the space around you. In general, tourists in a large city are more likely to gaze upward at tall buildings, or stare across the streets and into storefronts, whereas locals are more likely to walk briskly to their destinations, taking less notice of the (familiar) space around them. You notice your orientation (or lack thereof) most acutely when you are lost. In an unfamiliar city, most people are more acutely aware of their locations and orientations. Active orientation happens as a result of disorientation. To continue the example, feeling disoriented in a new city causes most people to orient themselves actively, taking note of the direction they are facing, the number of turns they take, landmarks nearby. Ahmed focuses on orientation in the context of migration, immigration, and the resulting effects on the conception of "home." Her examination is also pertinent for thinking about how relocation after (or during) war affects the perception of home.

[125] Bowen's and Farrell's work represents a departure from other representations of the "Big House" that were more nostalgic or perhaps nationalistic, for example W.B. Yeats's "Ancestral Houses" or Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*.

[126] See also Ronald Tamplin in Ralph Crane (51-52); Vera Kreilkamp (20-25).

Protestant ruling class in Ireland. The Big House genre, engendered by Edgeworth's novel, was sustained and adapted by many Irish and Anglo-Irish writers, including Somerville and Ross, Bram Stoker, and Molly Keane. While older criticism on Bowen often reads her work as nostalgic or apologetic, recent criticism has revised these views to read her work as subversive to generic norms.[127] It is worth noting that while critics have engaged with Bowen's politics, especially through her revision of the gothic, they have remained quiet on the question of Bowen's approach to British colonialism in Ireland.[128] Passages of *The Last September* suggest that Bowen was both aware and critical of British colonial control.[129] And yet if Bowen's novel sustains (at least in part) the nostalgia that Lyotard would argue is characteristic of modernism, Farrell's novel seems to revel in the Big House's decay on architectural, psychological, and formal levels. *Troubles* is subversive in more evident ways than is Bowen's novel, through its revision of the house into a hotel, its modifications of the genre, and its the dark sense of humor. Despite Farrell's conspicuous revision of genre and history, some critics continue to overlook the satirical aspects of his work.[130]

For both authors, the signification of the "Big House" had changed considerably from its representation early Big House novels. In her memoir *Bowen's Court*, Bowen describes the "Big

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[127] For example, Seamus Deane famously characterized Bowen's work as nostalgic and conservative. Recent criticism by Jed Esty, Beth Wightman and Shannon Well-Lassange have made the case that Bowen's work was not merely politically engaged but actively subversive in its treatment of Britain's occupation of Ireland; and work by John McLeod, Ralph Crane, and Merritt Moseley have argued that Farrell is strongly anti-imperial and actively revises nostalgic generic protocols. This criticism examines the politics of the Big House novel, countering claims that the genre is "apolitical" or that the Anglo-Irish are unaware of what happens outside the walls of their house (Wurtz 120). On the gothic and transgression, see Phyllis Lassner and Paul Derdiger. For the gothic and Bowen, see Jed Esty, Shannon Wells-Lassange, and P. Boxall. For the gothic and Farrell, see Robert Garratt. This essay focuses less on generic revisions, which have been thoughtfully examined in the criticism.

[128] Even Esty's chapter on Bowen defers the question of how Bowen viewed Ireland in relation to British imperialism. That is, even if his chapter uses a postcolonial framework to examine the novel, he avoids the question about whether Bowen would have been aware of Ireland as a colonial possession in the first place.

[129] I think especially of Lois's comment, "England is so moral, so dreadfully keen on not losing her temper…Can you wonder this country [Ireland] gets irritated?" (66), which I will discuss in more depth later.

[130] Ronald Tamplin represents *Troubles* as somewhat nostalgic, explaining that "it is natural that [Farrell's] concentration should be on the losses rather than the gains in the demise of the houses and the social structures they symbolized" (51).

House" as a space that families occupy but never own: "A Bowen, in the first place, made Bowen's Court. Since then, with a rather alarming sureness, Bowen's Court has made all the succeeding Bowens" (23). In Bowen's representation, Bowen's Court has a stability that the occupants do not: the house shapes the subjects within, even as they come and go. Many Anglo-Irish families, like Bowen's, had been in Ireland for centuries and felt both Irish and English, even as they were not wholly a part of either set of national ideologies. By the time Bowen wrote *The Last September*, many Anglo-Irish estates had been damaged or destroyed by the conflicts in the late teens and early twenties.[131] By 1970, when J.G. Farrell published *Troubles*, the Irish War of Independence was long over but Ireland remained embroiled in conflict.[132] Farrell's representation of the war takes very different form than Bowen's, despite their shared subject matter. His "Big House" is instead a big hotel, called The Majestic, a massive, decaying house where guests have to migrate from room to room as ceilings cave in and furniture rots.

For Lois, the protagonist of *The Last September*, and the Major, the protagonist of *Troubles*, the Irish War of Independence disoriented everyday life as well as the conception of home. In small ways, the war disorients their homes: Lois can't go out in the evenings because of the risk of IRA attack; there are limited funds to repair the Majestic, and the Major has to change rooms frequently when water comes through the ceilings or furniture disintegrates. But in larger ways, the war reorients them to Ireland as home.[133] Whereas Lois and the Major each arrive hoping to find a sense of home—for Lois, her mother had lived at Danielstown; for the Major, he hopes to find a wife and home there—they cannot find home in the unsettled space of the big

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[131] See James Donnelly.

[132] As Eve Walshe Stoddard writes of contemporary Irish literature, "attention to the diaspora and to immigration have complicated notions of Irishness…[t]he question of locating Irishness invokes a set of conflicting discourses about 'home' and belonging and their inverse, alienation or strangeness" (148).

[133] Although Lois and the Major live in Ireland, neither identify as Irish, and neither have long-term plans to stay in Ireland, in large part because of the war. It is worth noting that neither Lois nor the Major fit within a conventional categorization of Anglo-Irish. While Lois's mother grew up in Ireland, the Major has fewer connections there. In the sense that both characters literally belong to neither country, they are caricatures of the Anglo-Irish.

house. Both characters have uncertain futures that figuratively echo the uncertain future of the Irish country house; they are orphaned, arrive at these Irish country estates with nowhere else to go, and have few or aimless plans for their futures.[134] In part, Lois's and the Major's social disorientation is the result of political conflict, which waylaid many people's future plans but both characters also defer other conventional choices, like marriage and family, what Sara Ahmed calls the "collective directions" that shape people's choices.[135] As I discuss in greater detail in the closing section of the chapter, Bowen and Farrell both felt marginalized, and their orientation to mainstream belonging seems to take root in their novels' protagonists. Lois and the Major each find multiple paths available for them, distinct from conventional or expected routes. Both eschew marriage—Lois and the Major break off their engagements (or have them broken by circumstance) and both prefer travel to settling down in a career or owning a home. Their unsettled lives, the "unexpected lines" of their futures shape the psychological sub-texts of the novels' representations of the "Big House."

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[134] While the Major, for instance, does literally return to where he grew up in London to visit his aging aunt, London no longer feels like home and he returns to Kilnalough and refuses to leave, even when the violence intensifies at the Majestic. His early remark about the Majestic remains true to the end of the novel: when he first arrives after the war, he remarks that, "he almost felt as if he were going home. And this was fortunate because by this time, except for an elderly aunt in Bayswater, he had no family of his own to go to" (9). With his family gone, the Major repudiates the idea that London is the "centre of 'Life'," thinking that "though it was indeed the centre of the Empire it was no more than centre of 'Life' than, say, Chicago, Amritsar, or Timbuctoo—'Life' being everywhere equal and coeval" (120).

[135] These "collective directions" shape sexual orientation and following conventional paths like heterosexual marriage is part of being "in line." She describes sexuality in the terms of space: "Queer is, after all, a spatial term, which then gets translated into a sexual term, a term for a twisted sexuality that does not follow a 'straight line'…sexuality itself can be considered a spatial formation" (67). For Ahmed, queerness is a kind of disorientation and reorientation. A queer orientation is not necessarily sexual if we read it through space; it might also be an orientation away from the conventional routes of rooted citizenship, certain careers, or family relationships. "In the conventional family home what appears requires following a certain line, the family line that directs our gaze. The heterosexual couple becomes a point along this line, which is given to the child as its inheritance or background. The background then is not simply "behind" the child: it is what the child is asked to aspire "toward." The background, given in this way, can orient us toward the future: it is where the child is asked to direct its desire by accepting the family line as its own inheritance" (560).

Bowen's Big House

> Personally, [Lois] liked the ante-room, though it wasn't the ideal place to read or talk. Four rooms opened off it, and at any moment a door might be opened, or blow open, sending a draught down one's neck. People passed through it continually […] The high windows were curtainless; tasseled fringes frayed the light at the top. The white sills—the shutters folded back in their frames—were blistered, as though the house had spent a day in the tropics. Exhausted by sunshine, the backs of the crimson chairs were a thin, light orange; a smell of camphor and animals drawn from skins on the floor in the glare of morning still hung like dust on the evening chill. Going through to her room at nights Lois often tripped with her toe in the jaws of a tiger; a false step at any time sent some great claw skidding over the polish. Pale regimental groups, reunions a generation ago of the family or neighbourhood, gave out from the walls a vague depression (Bowen 7).

The Last September opens with this description of the ante-room in Danielstown, the Anglo-Irish country estate in which the novel is set. *The Last September* is an architectural novel, structured by the rooms of Danielstown, where the characters search for belonging in the house and in Ireland. The representation of the Danielstown is largely filtered through the perceptions of Lois, an orphaned teenager staying with her aunt and uncle at Danielstown for the summer. Caught between girlhood and womanhood, between Irishness and Englishness, between the future possibilities of marriage or of solitary travel, Lois is in transition. The ante-room captures a tension that runs through the novel: guests are caught between their desire for rootedness and the foreboding sense of change that pervades the house. As a room that is both within the house and an entrance to the house, the ante-room is an in-between, transitory space that reflects the liminal position of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland on the eve of the Irish War of Independence. I read *The Last September* as a novel about the disorientation that results from the competing desires for stability at home and the reality of continuous historical change. The Big House becomes a site for navigating this tension, in which characters experience their longings for "home" and the shattering of their social position in Ireland through the disruptions of their rooms. The novel's

plot centers on the late summer social life of Danielstown, an estate that has been in the hands of the Naylors for as long as Bowen's Court was part of Bowen's family. At Danielstown, sleepy social gatherings are set in contrast with the persistent but euphemized threat of violence from the Irish Republican Army. One of the rare moments of action in the text—Lois's brief courtship with Gerald, an officer in the British Army—ends in ruins, as does Danielstown.

From Lois's perspective, the ante-room presents a series of pleasing juxtapositions that implicitly echo her unsettled future: the room is simultaneously enclosed and open, combines solitude with the pervasive possibility of company, and contains both the familiar and the exotic. It functions as a hallway as much as it is a contained room of its own. The "four rooms" into which it opens into make the ante-room offer multiple routes in and out, and although "people passed through it continually," it rarely seems to be occupied for long periods of time. The white windowsills, "blistered as though the house had spent a day in the tropics," suggest that the house is figuratively located outside of Ireland as well as within. The exotic implicitly threatens the house's livelihood, making the house age prematurely, its furniture "exhausted by sunshine." Objects within the room, such as the tiger skin on the floor or the "troop of ebony elephants brought back from India" that line the top of a bookcase, are a visual reminder that the house is imbricated with British colonialism. Moreover, these objects from afar throw Lois off balance—one "false step" on the tiger-skin rug risks tripping Lois as she moves from one room to the next at night. The room's objects (skidding rug, multiple doorways and windows, colonial artifacts) and liminal qualities (both hallway and sitting room, with evening chill and morning light, drafty but bleached by sun) force Lois to actively choose her route, her footing, her way in and out. Lois is made aware of her orientation, both in the ante-room and in Ireland, where she is not quite at home but not entirely out of place, either.

While most critics have focused on how the ante-room reflects the liminality of the house or novel, I want to shift attention to how the doors and the windows in the room suggest not just debilitation, but expanding possibility. I would suggest that positioning the spatial politics of the novel as *disorienting* rather than *liminal* nuances the text's position on the future of Ireland as well as its colonial past. Critics have described both the ante-room and the text as "liminal,"[136] "locationless,"[137] "unlocatable,"[138] "haunted,"[139] "uncanny,"[140] and "paralyzed."[141] In viewing the room as "liminal," critics set up the ante-room as a symbol for the Anglo-Irish being caught between Irishness and Englishness. But a view of the Anglo-Irish as *disoriented* in this moment of history sees them not just caught between two choices, but implicated in a network of imperial violence that does not simply offer a choice: Irish or English? My reading of the room as disorienting takes note of four doorways, rather than simply two. That is, Bowen's Anglo-Irish struggle to confront their position in an imperial network, and the IRA's violence does not merely force them to feel "caught between" but demands a larger reconfiguration and reconsideration of their politics.

Disorientation is thus a term that signals not just the moment of being lost, but the moment of reorienting, reinhabiting, taking account of one's surroundings, and actively finding one's way. Rather than see disorientation resulting in "shattering" or "unsettling," as Ahmed suggests is likely, I see disorientation as galvanizing, as well (157). The four doors opening out of the ante-room signal how moments of disorientation are also moments of promise. Although the ante-room itself is caught in the middle, its four doors signal that it offers passageways to

[136] Wells-Lassange, 452.
[137] Esty, 182.
[138] Wightman, 54.
[139] Gerend, 51.
[140] Osborn, 47.
[141] Lassner and Derdiger, 196.

many different rooms, many different spaces within the house. The moment of disorientation that Lois experiences within the ante-room is the necessary precondition for her expanded choice and possibility at her particular historical moment. Lois's visit to Danielstown is an ante-room in the house of her future, a transitional space that opens up into different choices for adulthood. Rather than see her future prescribed in front of her, Lois contemplates travel, a career, or marriage. The room's openness also signals a moment of possibility for Ireland, where the stagnation of British colonial control might give way. In an essay written the same year as *The Last September*, Bowen writes that in comparison with New York's vitality, Dublin "exhales melancholy, the past and the sense of an obliterated purpose… an anticlimactic, possibly endless pause" (*Selected Writings* 29). For Bowen, it seems, Ireland was stagnant, and only the infusion of "foreign life" from outside offers it the possibility of renewal and vitality.[142] The ante-room embodies Ireland, the house, and its occupants in a moment of personal and political transition.

My reading of the ante-room also helps explain the oddities of Bowen's prose, where deferred meaning and layered possibility produce both paralysis and possibility for readers. While others have noted Bowen's circuitous prose, few have drawn connections between the effects of her prose on the reader and the effects of the house on its occupants.[143] In a sense, the novel's disorienting grammar performs the disorienting rooms of the house. If Lois is liable to trip over the rug on the ante-room floor, then readers may also be likely to trip over the novel's phrasing, as Susan Osborn inadvertently suggests when she describes Bowen's style as "disorient[ing]," "uncanny," "uneven," "disjuncti[ve]," and "disrupt[ive]" (45-46). Bowen's

[142] As I will discuss later, Bowen's views on Ireland's relationship with the exterior world shifted. In a review of Christine Longford's *A Biography of Dublin*, written in 1936, Bowen credits the "continuous influx of foreign life" as the source of Dublin's new "vitality and complexity as a city" (31). For her, "the invader, the trader, the opportunist, the social visitor have all added strife or color," which marks a significant shift in her attitude from her 1929 review, in which she laments the conditions of Dublin's poor and its political situation (30-31).

[143] For discussions of Bowen's uncanny style, see Anna Teekell on Bowen's later novel, *The Heat of the Day*. Susan Osborn, Jed Esty, and Brook Miller discuss Bowen's style, but not its affective power over the reader.

stylistic meandering echoes the description of the ante-room; her circuitous prose produces similar disorienting effects in the reader as the ante-room produces in its occupants. For instance, the final sentence of this passage offers multiple meanings: "Pale regimental groups, reunions a generation ago of the family or neighbourhood, gave out from the walls a vague depression" (7). Here the phrase "pale regimental groups" seems at first to be a literal description of military units, perhaps even as a physical presence in the room, but when it is modified by the subject "reunions…of the family or neighbourhood," its signification also becomes metaphorical. The fact that these "pale regimental groups" are likely photographic or painted images is only apparent from the passive phrasing, "gave out from the walls a vague depression," which suggests that these groups are hanging pictures rather than tangible presences. This scene points to the sometimes invisible militaristic functions of the Anglo-Irish landowners in Ireland, but it also suggests how even their passive presence (via pictures or photographs) disrupts the familial space of Danielstown.[144]

In *The Last September*, characters experience changes in their relationship to Ireland through the space of the house. Even as they rely on Danielstown to provide a sense of stability, the rooms through which they experience home are unsettling. Many of the characters living at Danielstown are wanderers looking for a sense of stability: Lois, an orphan, is living there after she finishes boarding school; the Montmorencys, old friends of the Naylors (Danielstown's landlords), are perpetually between homes; and Laurence, Lois's cousin, is reluctantly visiting for the summer. While each might be looking for stability at Danielstown, the house refuses them this security. The Montmorencys, for example, arrive at Danielstown after losing their home in Canada; they hope to restore the sense of home they felt during prior visits to

[144] See also the later discussion of Mrs. Fogarty's drawing-room, in which the photographs of soldiers also become physical.

Danielstown. For Francie Montmorency, "She had had, too, very strongly a sense of return, of having been awaited. Rooms, doorways had framed a kind of expectancy of her" (14). Here, the psychological experience of expectancy is "framed" by and through the doorways, which both literally frame the rooms and house that she occupies and also figuratively frame the "sense of return" that she has when she arrives at Danielstown. Rooms and doorways in Danielstown structure Francie's experience—she reads them as spaces that anticipate her arrival yet also as spaces that produce possibility for her. Francie remembers her first visit to Danielstown as one of the happiest periods in her life, but this "sense of return" to home is abated by some of the moments that follow, in which she is lost or observes "something unremembered about the face of the house" (15). Francie, too, feels coldness in the house: "a chilly breath from the future" (15). Though she seeks a sense of warmth and return, she also finds a house that is uncertain and in part unknown to her. Her husband, Hugo, also finds his desire for hominess unsettled by the house's interior. He tells his wife that he "knew the place as well as his own house" (13), but when they return they find that there was "some intensification…made the place different" (16). Francie catalogues the changes to the house—different stair-carpet in the house, a different guest room, and even her own reflection which causes her to notice, with surprise, that Myra Naylor has aged (16). The house, of course, refuses the stability that Francie projects onto her memory of it.

Bowen's approach to violence is far more euphemistic than Farrell's, owing perhaps to her historical position. *The Last September* makes fewer explicit mentions of the war than does *Troubles*, but it weaves the insecurity, disorientation, and decay into its figurative language. The characters either expressly try to avoid the war, like Marda complaining that there is nothing to do "except not notice" the war; or they treat military occupation, as Esty describes it, "in the

terms of a hostess eager to ensure a ready supply of gallant dancing partners" (182). The novel's language is a counter-narrative to the euphemistic or even outright denials of violence. For instance, in one scene, Lois describes the façade of Danielstown as "like cardboard, high and confident in the sun—a house without weight, an appearance, less actual than the begonias' scarlet and wax-pink flesh" (167). The exterior of the house seems unreal and flimsy to Lois, as if it's made of "cardboard." The house is not solid, but "without weight"; it is not real, but "an appearance." Lois's description of the house anticipates Massey's argument that space is not "closed, coherent, or integrated" but instead abstract, often shifting, and unstable. In more practical terms, Lois perceives the lack of stability that other characters refuse to see. Her perception of Danielstown as "less actual" than the flowers anticipates the house's demolition later in the novel. Although it once offered security, Danielstown during the war is already a ghost of its former self. However, the war itself has aspects of ghostliness. Because the Irish War of Independence was a conflict largely waged between guerilla forces and paramilitaries, it eroded boundaries between public and private, between violence and security, between combatant and non-combatant. The battlefield is both public and private space, and uses both civilians and soldiers. In this sense, the Irish War of Independence corroded the sanctity of private life and the Big House materializes this sensation that war had invaded private space.[145]

Thus, while critics like Kristine Miller have argued that war damages the security of the house, I want to argue that the intrusion of politics into the domestic interior is a shift *revealed*, but not necessarily caused, by war. Bowen writes the language of military occupation into the representation of Danielstown. The novel describes the drawing room just before dinner on the day the Naylors' guests, their old friends Francie and Huge Montmorency, have arrived:

[145] This caused anxiety for Bowen, who remarked that "the destruction of buildings and furniture is more palpably dreadful to the spirit than the destruction of human life" (Walshe, 2009).

> The pale room rose to a height only mirrors followed above the level of occupation; this disproportionate zone of emptiness dwarfed at all times figures and furniture. The distant ceiling imposed on consciousness its blank white oblong, and a pellucid silence, distilled from a hundred and fifty years of society, waited under the ceiling. Into this silence voices went up in stately attenuation (23).

In obvious ways, this passage weaves militaristic language into its representation of the high-ceilinged drawing room: "occupation," "disproportionate zone," "imposed," "blank," "stately," a double entendre that implies both the state or court and the room's majesty. The room also vaguely unsettles the occupants, "imposing" on their consciousness, "dwarfing" them, and in some ways silencing them: even the talkative Laurence and Mrs. Montmorency are quieted by the room: "Now there were no voices. Mrs. Montmorency and Laurence sat looking away from each other" (23). In this passage, the house's interior is more powerful than its inhabitants—the room "dwarf[s]" those who enter it. Its attenuating high ceilings quiet the voices of the Anglo-Irish who occupy it. "A hundred and fifty years of society" of history waits silently in the ceiling. The ceiling's silence reflects the Naylors' silence on the political conflict in their backyard: the family voices their sympathy for the Irish rebels as well as the Black and Tans, but they refuse to resist British imperialism in any meaningful way.

The security that Lois and the Naylors might look for within the house is troubled by the violence that penetrates the grounds of Danielstown. From within the house, characters often have a view of the outside—both literally and figuratively, as we see from Lois's frequent meditations on what she will do after she leaves Danielstown at the end of the summer or

Francie's considerations of the house she'd like to someday settle in. On the first evening, Lois gazes from the dining-room window onto the demesne of Danielstown:

> The screen of trees that reached like an arm from behind the house—embracing the lawns, banks and terraces in mild ascent—had darkened, deepening into a forest. Like splintered darkness, branches pierced the faltering dusk of leaves. Evening drenched the trees; the beeches were soundless cataracts. Behind the trees, pressing in from the open and empty country like an invasion, the orange bright sky crept and smouldered (25-26).

What is immediately evident is Bowen's violent language, including the heavy-handed foreshadowing of a smoldering "orange bright sky" coming from the "open and empty country," prefiguring the fire that comes to destroy Danielstown. What many critics seem to overlook in this passage is the implicit desire for security that is at odds with the violent figurative language: the "screen of trees," the metaphorical "arm" that "embrac[es]" the house. I read this as a moment in which the aggressive threat of violence runs parallel with the desire for security and stability within Danielstown. Furthermore, this passage does not merely foreshadow the violent ends of Danielstown. It echoes the violence already implicit within the dining room from which Lois views the scene. As Lois watches from the window, she experiences the violence of the outside grounds within the house, where the light from outside "was stored in the mirrors, in the sheen of the wallpaper" (26), and throughout dinner she finds that "the air of the room [was] unconvincingly painted, startled, transitory" (28). The violence, the sense of darkness and transience, occur within the rooms of the house, as well as outside them.

Descriptions of interior rooms often reveal a more complex orientation toward Ireland than the characters might explicitly admit. Although many of the characters try to keep colonial

violence at bay, their rooms reflect their conflicted positions. Mrs. Fogarty, for examples, seems to have little awareness about her own participation in the war, yet her rooms reveal her divided political loyalties that are at odds with a desire for coziness, security, or peace. When Lois goes to tea at the house of the Naylors' friend, Mrs. Fogarty, she finds that the house preserves an illusion of security from external conflicts that is rapidly exposed to be unstable. At Mrs. Fogarty's house, "windows were screened from outside observation by cubes of evergreen; between the pane and the evergreens rain fell darkly" (102). The coziness or stability of the house, which feels to Lois "very easy and very Irish," is destabilized by the drawing room, which is:

> thronged with photographs; all the dear boys who for many years past had been garrisoned at Clonmore […] You could not stoop to put down a cup on one of the little tables without a twinge of regret and embarrassment, meeting the candid eyes of some dead young man. The room was crowded with cushions that slid from the narrow seats of the chairs…dear old cushions with associations and feathers bursting out at the seams (101-102).

The drawing room becomes a zone of imperial conflict, where guests meet the "candid eyes" of dead British soldiers. The zeugma of "associations and feathers" reflects the way household objects are implicated in the experience of the war—both the memories of soldiers and the furniture itself are "bursting out at the seams" in the drawing room. Despite her belief that the scene at her house "was all very harmonious," Mrs. Fogarty's contested loyalties reflect what Ellmann calls a lack of "clear frontiers" in the Irish War of Independence, where the currents of sympathies travel in many directions (103, 56). Lois experiences Mrs. Fogarty's divided loyalties through disjunctions in the drawing-room: Mrs. Fogarty is an Irish Catholic with Unionist

sympathies, a woman who decorates her drawing room with Union Jack cushions and photographs of dead soldiers. Her drawing room becomes a site of remembrance, a memorial to lost soldiers both British and Irish. This contributes to the disorienting sense in the novel that one never quite knows what kind of "perceptual space" one occupies, as David Harvey describes it (28). Does Mrs. Fogarty's living room form part of nationalist Ireland? Anglo-Ireland? British-occupied Ireland? Unionist Ireland? Mrs. Fogarty's drawing room reflects her shifting political sympathies, even as it forces memories and "associations" of the war on her visitors.

When Gerald, Lois's boyfriend and a British soldier, visits Danielstown, he too experiences tension between his loyalty to the Black and Tans and the house's history in Ireland. When Gerald comes to tea, Lois's cousin Laurence questions Gerald's political loyalties. Flustered, Gerald wishes "to explain that no one could have a sounder respect than himself and his country for the whole principle of nationality, and that it was with some awareness of misdirection, even of paradox, that he was out here to hunt and shoot the Irish" (133). This sense of "misdirection" takes root in the drawing-room itself, which "became to Gerald fantastic and thin like an ice-palace and, reflected backwards and forwards in tall mirrors, seemed like a chain of galleries at Versailles" (137). The room itself refuses Gerald the stability that he seeks in Ireland, the direction, sense of purpose, and "principle of nationality" that he believes he can claim. Instead of feeling rooted in his country, he feels transported to Versailles, another spatial symbol of monarchy. His sense of "misdirection" and "paradox" then, is not simply a paralyzing disorientation; it signals Gerald's more expansive view of his role in Ireland. His belief that he is stationed in Ireland because he loves and respects England is undermined by his sudden and troubling thought that "he was out here to hunt and shoot the Irish," with whom he has significant peaceful social interaction, as well. The room that transforms into a "fantastic" space

that reflects the world "backwards and forwards" is like the ante-room, in that it suddenly opens up greater possibilities to Gerald. This moment is disorienting to him—he feels "a kind of fog" settle over him—but the violence of the paradox forces Gerald to momentarily reconsider his position.

Spaces like Mrs. Fogarty's drawing-room and Gerald's experience in Danielstown's drawing room capture a violent disjunction between some the Anglo-Irish gentry's overt refusals to consider their future within Ireland and the consequences of hundreds of years of colonial rule. In the novel's climax, Lois, Hugo Montmorency, and Marda walk through the Irish countryside and come across some of Ireland's "dead mills" whose decayed interiors implicitly suggests the effects of British rule on Ireland: "These dead mills—the country was full of them, never quite stripped and whitened to skeleton's decency: like corpses at their most horrible. 'Another,' Hugo declared, 'of our national grievances. English law strangled the—'" (178). Even in their death, the mills are indecently incomplete, as is Hugo's own sentence. The mills do not reach a "skeleton's decency"; instead, they are unsightly bodies perpetually in decay, "corpses at their most horrible." As Hugo haltingly suggests, the transitional decay and death of the mills is another result of English law, the same English law whose plantations and Penal Laws strangled the Irish in the previous two centuries. The decay of the mills, of course, stands for other kind of decay in Ireland, especially related to colonial rule:

> The river darkened and thundered towards the mill-race, light came full on the high façade of decay. Incredible in its loneliness, roofless, floorless, beams criss-crossing the dank interior daylight, the whole place tottered, fit to crash at a breath. Hinges rustily bled where a door had been wrenched away; up six storeys panes

> still tattered the daylight […] the dead mill now entered the democracy of ghostliness, equaled broken palaces in futility and sadness (179).

The closing lines of this passage relate the death of the mills to the death of colonial rule, allowing the mills to enter an ambivalent "democracy of ghostliness," in which it finds "broken palaces." Ireland's own ghosts of democracy, including failed uprisings and "broken" Big Houses evoke these bygone palaces. Lois imagines seeing the cracks in the walls open up and "peel back from a cleft—like the House of Usher" (180).[146] At the same time, the "dank interior" space of the mill is personified repeatedly: its hinges bleed, doors are wrenched from the inside, a living breath threatens to topple it. The ghostlike aspects of the mill evoke the gothic, a genre that Bowen both engaged and revised. James Wurtz has argued that in Bowen's use of the gothic, the "ghostliness" of the mills produces "an actual spatial disjunction; literally the presence of absence" that Lois (and the Big House) experience in other ways. The emotional sensation of loneliness is syntactically related to spatial absences: being roofless and floorless. In the final sentence, the mill's "futility and sadness" equals that of "broken palaces." These sensations from within are, in turn, related to Hugo's perceptions of the mills. When he is sitting outside, "[t]he mill behind affected him like a sense of the future; an unpleasant sensation of being tottered over" (182). Hugo's feeling that the mill "tottered" over him makes personal the language of the earlier passage, in which "the whole place tottered," in general. For Hugo, the mill is like a "sense of the future," amplifying the earlier remark that the dead mills are entering into a new democracy. Indeed, if the mills are a symbol of the "deterioration of Irish economy under the Act

[146] See also Bowen's story "The Back Drawing-Room," in which an Englishman seeking shelter from a storm and help with his broken bicycle enters a Big House on a country road, where he encounters what he believes to be a ghost. When he returns to his uncle's house that evening and recounts his journey, his uncle tells him that the house he claims to have entered had been burned two winters ago. In this story, the Englishman also describes the experience of escaping from the mirage of the house as like being in "the House of Usher" (209).

of Union," then their tottering foundations suggest the uncertain future of the Anglo-Irish within Ireland, with the spatial symbols of British imperialism in ruins in the Irish countryside (Wurtz 126).

If rooms in *The Last September* refuse the stability that the characters seek there, then the novel's formal qualities also refuse stability that readers might seek in its sentences. I read the language, organization, and sentence structure as a response to the material environment of Danielstown. My reading offers a way to see Bowen's disorienting formal choices as actively engaging with the problems of national belonging that the characters experience. The breakdown of the solidity of the rooms within Danielstown is enacted through the breakdown of the stability of certain narrative conventions, including narrative perspectives, unusual grammatical choices, and disjunctive figurative language. Recent criticism has acknowledged the politics of Bowen's form, but I want to suggest that we can read Bowen's form as a direct response to the disorienting complexities of her material environment.[147] For her reader, a novel such as *The Last September* is itself another "Big House." Each chapter is like a room, collected together under a single roof (or cover) with entrances in and out, like Henry James's house of fiction with its millions of windows offering numerous view of life.[148] The first section of the novel, "The Arrival of the Montmorencys" is divided into chapters that each focus on a character or room, shifting from Lois's perspective in the ante-room to the Montmorencys conversing in their guest room, to Gerald on the lawn. As readers, we move from one room to the next and from one mind

[147] For critics who discuss the intersection of Bowen's style and politics, see Anna Teekell, Jed Esty, Brook Miller, Phyllis Lassner and Paula Derdiger, and Susan Osborn.

[148] James writes: "The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million —a number of possible windows not to be reckoned, rather; every one of which has been pierced , or is still pierceable, in its vast front , by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will . These apertures, of dissimilar shape and size, hang so, all together, over the human scene that we might have expected of them a greater sameness of report than we find. They are but windows at best, mere holes in a dead wall, disconnected, perched aloft; they are not hinged doors opening straight upon life."

to the next.[149] Though the chapters begin by offering a sense of boundaries and stability, this stability soon dissolves. Windows within the chapters offer glimpses of views outside—to the Montmorencys prior travels, Lois's past in boarding school, Miss Norton on the train. As the novel continues, the discrete separation between characters' viewpoints in each chapter gives way to chapters that shuttle between characters. Toward the end of the novel, the action is taking place at the military barracks, and dips into the minds of multiple characters (Gerald, the Rolfes, Mrs Perkins, Daventry, Cecily Ralte, Mrs. Vermont). In the novel's chapter structure, discrete categorization is supplanted by a more expansive narrative point-of-view.

On a sentence-level, Bowen's language obscures the relationship between the space of Danielstown and Lois's personal experience. On a drive with Mr. Montmorency, Lois contemplates Danielstown from the road: "Seen from above, the house in its pit of trees seemed a very reservoir of obscurity; from the doors one must come out stained with it" (93). The house is perceived in terms indicating uncertainty. Is the house obscure because its future is unsettled? Or does Lois see it as obscure because *her* future is unsettled and she projects it onto the landscape? Or does the Irish War of Independence produce a feeling of uncertainty that penetrates both people and houses? The novel's language does not clearly attribute the obscurity to Lois's sensations, nor does it seem solely a matter of narrative fact. In the first passage, the passive construction leaves this unresolved. The phrase "seen from above" implies a viewer, but who exactly is looking? This linguistic elusiveness is characteristic of Bowen's novels, which seem to tell a different story each time you reread them.[150]

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[149] The first chapter, from Lois's point of view, largely takes place in and around the ante-room. The second chapter moves primarily to Francie Montmorency's head, and takes place in the Blue Room, where she and her husband stay. The third chapter moves to the dining room for dinner, the fourth to the front porch after dinner; the fifth to the lawns, and so on.

[150] Jerome McGann has argued that "texts are not self-identical" (149). For Bowen's novels, this is particularly true, given her slippery and often disorienting language.

Often, Bowen's language seems designed to produce disorientation. The opening lines of *The Last September* depict the Montmorencys driving up the road to Danielstown: "Up among the beeches, a thin iron gate twanged; the car slid out of a net of shadows down the slope to the house. Behind the flashing windscreen Mr. and Mrs. Montmorency produced—arms waving and a wild escape to the wind of her mauve motor veil—an agitation of greeting" (3). Ellmann has noted the remarkable way these lines diminish human agency. The passivity that she notices, however, is not merely a matter of Bowen's phrasing, in which objects are grammatical subjects (the "iron gate," the car). It is also a matter of deferral, or what I might call grammatical disorientation, in which the real actor in the sentence is lost. The agent of forward movement is a car rather than the Montmorencys, but even the verb suggests aimlessness: "slid." The Montmorencys do not "wave energetically"; instead they "produce" an "agitation of greeting," as if they are passive objects through which events pass. Rather than see the use of passive voice as evidence of "the subordination of the individual to fate," as Ellmann does, I read the passage as reflecting the paralysis that the Naylors and Lois feel in the face of the Montmorencys' arrival, an arrival that signals other intrusions of the outside world into the space of the novel and Danielstown (60). Significantly, the novel's opening scene features the arrival of outsiders (the Montmorencys) to Danielstown, and these outsiders feel themselves at home ("a sense of return, of having been awaited" at Danielstown [14]). Metaphorically then, the Montmorencys' arrival signals other kinds of arrivals to Danielstown, including the arrival of Irish Nationalists, who fight to reclaim their land also based on a "sense of return." This first paragraph also uses sentence structures that are interrupted syntactically, either by modifying clauses ("behind the flashing windscreen") or by grammatical boundary-markers like commas or em-dashes. Bowen's language repeatedly defers meaning, forcing the reader to create her own path through the

passive verbs and deferred agency to find a sentence's meaning. In this way, her sentence structures perform Lois's own agitated indecision about her future, a passivity marked by deferring choice.

Much of *The Last September* is concerned with how orphans, exiles, and the politically-conflicted Anglo-Irish view national belonging when the home they seek is repeatedly destabilized or denied to them. Although Ellmann has argued that "architecture takes the place of psychology" in *The Last September*, I see architecture and psychology as co-determined, rather than substituent (42). Bowen's sentence structures repeatedly indicate how characters' emotional conditions and the space of the house are mutually constituted. Early in the novel, Lois observes: "the large façade of the house stared *coldly* over its mounting lawns. She wishes she could *freeze* the moment" (4; italics my own). The house's cold stare mirrors Lois's desire to freeze the scene. The scene also captures the tension between Lois's desire to find a sense of home at Danielstown and her inability to do so. Like Lois, her mother was "too Irish altogether for her own country," as Mrs. Montmorency remarks to her husband. Neither Irish nor English and yet both Irish and English, Lois expresses her sympathies for both sides.[151] Rather than read her conflicted views as immobilizing, as Wightman does, I see Lois's divided sympathies as both troubling and expansive. Lois may be caught between Irishness and Englishness, but she also feels strong belonging to each place. In other important ways, Lois is in-between, a character in transition trying to figure out how to orient herself toward her future. Throughout the novel, the Naylors and Montmorencys alternate referring to her as a "girl" and a "woman"; she is in a no-

[151] In one noteworthy moment, Lois says it's "no wonder this country [Ireland] gets irritated" with England, because of its moral superiority.

man's-land between the two.[152] In Lois's vision of her future, she sees what Doreen Massey might call "the world beyond one's own turf" (15).

The novel frequently presents marriage as a symbolic house, whose stability is under fire because of war. For Gerald, marriage might provide spatial stability, the kind that he imagines houses to have. He thinks, "In this world, affections were rare and square—four-square—occurring like houses in a landscape, unrelated and positive, though with sometimes a large bright looming—as of the sunned west face of Danielstown over the tennis courts" (53). For Marda, another young visitor to Danielstown, marriage also conjures a sense of spatial stability. Marda thinks that her personality might be "fixed and localized by her being with him [her fiancé]—to become as the bricks and wallpaper of a home" (187). These examples show how Marda and Gerald view marriage: as a stabilizing condition that would locate each of them fixedly. Marriage would not only literally provide Marda with bricks and wallpaper in a home of her own; it would make her *become* as fixed the bricks and wallpaper of a home. For these characters, however, marriage proves to be about as stable as the "Big House." These characters continue to seek stability or protection in houses even as the narrative repeatedly shows that these spaces are destabilized.

Although Lois wants marriage to save her from a life of "deserted rooms, the penetration of silences, rain, homelessness" (221), she finds instead that her relationship with Gerald intensifies, rather than mends, her sense of homelessness. After Gerald kisses her, Lois thinks, "So that was being kissed: just an impact, with inside blankness. She was lonely, and saw there was no future. She shut her eyes and tried—as sometimes when she was seasick, locked in misery between Holyhead and Kingstown—to be enclosed in nonentity, in some ideal no-place"

[152] Jed Esty has argued that Lois is caught between girlhood and womanhood in a state of suspended adolescence, yet this moment of suspension in fact offers her a greater number of choices for her future (*Unseasonable Youth*, 181-83).

(127). On a boat between Holyhead and Kingstown, Lois is at sea, in between two places; her seasickness is in part the result of being dislocated. Rather than feel the "sense of being located" that she assumes that intimacy would provide, Lois sees immediately that the relationship has "no future." Lois's description of the kiss producing "an impact, with inside blankness" evokes the image of being shot, ironically how Gerald dies later in the novel. Instead of wishing to feel located as Gerald and Marda do, Lois tries to soothe herself by feeling dislocated, by imagining herself "enclosed in nonentity, in some ideal no-place." She flees back to a place of migration, disorientation, in-between-ness. Esty has called this moment the "perfect spatial equivalent" of Lois's stalled adolescence, in which we see that "there is simply no space for Lois" (186). I would shift the terms of this reading to attend to Lois's desire for a space that better fits her emotional experience of the kiss; thrust too firmly into the structured relations of intimacy, she seeks an escape to a more fitting "no-place." Being caught between—on a boat, in her adolescence, for her future, and in her kiss with Gerald—makes Lois ill and she escapes only by imagining a different kind of space—one that is "no-place" because it does not entirely exist for teenage girl in 1920.[153] Kissing Gerald produces the physical sensation of seasickness, of being caught between two places but not really occupying either. Seasickness is also a kind of disorientation; seasickness happens because the inner ear is disoriented about the location of firm ground. Here, Lois seems to identify strongly with such a disoriented space, a space neither here nor there, echoing the national, religious, and class dislocations she feels at Danielstown. Ultimately for Lois, this disorientation is troubling, but allows her to deviate from the perceived stability of marriage with Gerald.

[153] Another way to read this moment is through Ahmed's reading of sexual orientation: as Lois deviates from the "lines" of marriage and motherhood, she finds herself without a clear path. See also Marc Augé's concept of the "non-place," which I discuss further in chapter 4.

Lois imagines the possibility of traveling after she leaves the Naylors and yet her vision of travel violates the expected pathways through which a teenage girl might typically go abroad. Lois wants to travel at what Ahmed would call an "oblique angle" to the direction that her contemporaries might travel. Lois thinks:

> There was Rome, and she would like to stay in a hotel by herself…She would like to feel real in London…She wanted to go wherever the War hadn't…She wanted to go into cathedrals unadmonished and look up unprepared into the watery deep strangeness. There must be perfect towns where shadows were strong like buildings, towns secret without coldness, unaware without indifference…She liked unmarried sorts of places (142-43).

Lois wishes for travel outside of the typical routes; she wants to travel to different locations but she also wants to escape the traditional directions her life is expected to take. She imagines traveling to "unmarried sorts of places," where most of her peers might not travel, in literal ways (they are more likely to go to Paris on honeymoon) and figurative ways (their journeys are toward marriage). Her desire to see "unmarried" sorts of places suggests a need to see her surroundings reflect herself. For Lois is not only unmarried in the literal sense of being a single and childless woman, but unmarried in the sense of not being tied, fitted, or combined with another person. Without a spouse, a mother, or a sibling, Lois is alone. This loneliness directs her to geographic places that reflect her "unmarried"-ness, her oblique angle to the world. Lois wants to travel away from war, away from admonishment, and away from marriage. Moreover, she wants to travel in order to see "deep strangeness," to explore what is unknown to her and to see the unknown as substantial and real. She imagines that these "unmarried sorts of places" will open different spatial possibilities for her in "towns where shadows were *strong like buildings*,

towns secret without coldness" (143, italics my own). Lois seeks places where shadows—the invisible, the elided, the uncertain—become tangible physical spaces, "like buildings." Lois imagines alternative "perfect towns" where shadowy possibilities for her future become tangible realities, where "secrets" are not in hiding and where unawareness does not imply indifference. Lois imagines traveling to places where her alterative choices do not put her on the margins (or in the shadows, or in secret) but allow her the room to be unmarried, orphaned, or strange.

If characters seek stability in their relationships as they do in their houses, then when Danielstown is no longer a safe haven from conflict, it also unsettles the characters' ideological ideals about both marriage and home. More literally, the war destabilizes the safety of houses and also makes personal relationships uncertain, as Lois discovers violently when Gerald is suddenly killed. The interior space of the house is not—nor had ever been—a haven from military or political activity. Rather, the characters experience shifts in national discourse, political violence, and war through the rooms of their houses. These rooms capture a tension between the desire for stability and the unsettling effects of the novel's language. I read what seems stylistically out of place in Bowen's prose as a meaningful response to the challenge of representing "home" at a time when conceptually and architecturally, the home is destabilized by war. By the end of the novel, Danielstown is literally opened to Ireland: its "door stood open hospitably upon a furnace" with the "open and empty country" surrounding it after the "executioners" burn it to the ground (303).

In some ways, *Troubles* picks up where *The Last September* leaves off. Bowen's novel dwells on the tension between "things as they always were" and the effects of the war on the interior space (and interior psyches) of the characters. When Gerald is suddenly killed, the scene dwells on the delayed effects of his death: "The world did not stand still, though the household at

Danielstown and the Thompsons' lunch party took no account of it" (292). This brief moment of calm is also a moment of continued spatial stability (the household presumably standing still, in contrast to the world). Yet this peace is disrupted by the news of Gerald's death and once it reaches the characters, we see not just their reactions but the changes within their rooms: "the wicker furniture seemed to rise and waver" in the military barracks (293). Gerald's death, then, is experienced as an unsettling in the rooms themselves, an unsettling that reverberates into the characters' feelings about Ireland. In the barracks, where the furniture "waver[s]" and Mrs. Vermont cries out, "Why don't we all go home? That's what I can't understand" (293). Mrs. Vermont's sense of home in Ireland is disrupted by Gerald's death, symbolic of a larger fall of British control in Ireland. It also prefigures the larger "unsettling" of Danielstown, which is burned by rebels. If Bowen's novel ends with the house's "openness" to the Irish countryside, then Farrell's begins with it. Farrell's position later in the century is perhaps why his novel opens from the moment that Bowen's leaves off: with a scene of ruins. *Troubles* dispenses with the nostalgia that underpins *The Last September*, instead reveling in the dark comedy of the house's decay, including rotting animal heads in bedrooms, herds of demonic cats taking over the house, and the destruction of the Queen Victoria statue in the driveway. In the next section, I examine how colonial violence disrupts rooms in Farrell's representation of the Majestic, making all the guests migrants at home in the hotel.

Troubles and the Majestic

One of the significant differences between *Troubles* and *The Last September* is their approaches to the inevitable destruction of the houses at the center of each novel. While Bowen is unambivalent about the future of the Anglo-Irish big house, her novel still defers the moment

of destruction. *Troubles*, in contrast, opens proleptically with the scene of ruin, which leaves no ambiguity about the future of the hotel. And while Bowen is wounded by Danielstown's destruction (calling it an "execution"), the burning of the Majestic is cut through with comedy by a scene in which hundreds of flaming cats leap from the hotel's windows. The opening scene of *Troubles* surveys the ashen remains of the Majestic from the future perspective of the Major, who is there visiting with a grandchild sometime in the future.[154] Set along the sea in the fictional town of Kilnalough, all that endures of the Majestic are "the charred remains of the enormous main building" (5). In the final scene of the novel, the protagonist, Major Brendan Archer, wanders through the ashes of the Majestic, trying to inhabit the unfamiliar space: "He stepped from one blackened compartment to another trying to orientate himself and saying: 'I'm standing in the residents' lounge, in the corridor, in the writing-room'" (458). This scene, in which the Major tries to "orientate" himself in the disorienting ruins of the Majestic, is the culmination of a longer process of the Major's attempts to orient himself within the house and within Ireland. Finding the Majestic in ruins, the Major considers that the rooms "seemed much smaller—in fact, quite insignificant" when he sees them in full relation with the open and "mild Irish sky" in contrast to their overpowering effect on him earlier in the novel (458). Like Danielstown, the Majestic is also violently exposed to the outside world by the end of the novel.

Troubles is a novel about searching for stable ground, a search that is at once impossible to avoid but destined to fail. The Major, recently retired from the battlegrounds of the Great War, arrives at the Majestic to meet the woman he has been calling his fiancée, Angela Spencer. In the Major's relationship with Angela, we see currents of his desire for stability, a desire that is undercut repeatedly by the conditions of daily life in Ireland between World War I and the Irish

[154] This grandchild, notably, is unnamed and the reader is offered no other information about the familial relationship, including whom the Major might have married.

War of Independence. The Major describes meeting Angela on leave from the war, and though the circumstances are "dim," and "he was sure that he had never actually proposed," he is certain that "they were engaged: a certainty fostered by the fact that from the very beginning she had signed her letters 'Your loving fiancée'" (7-8). Although the Major concedes that "nothing definite had been settled," he hopes that going to the Majestic will be like "going home" and that he will be able "claim" Angela as his bride once he arrives.

This desire for security and stability, in his personal relationships as well as his lodgings, is immediately undercut by the space of the Majestic itself. He arrives to find the house in disrepair. Plaster rains down from the ceiling, sinks fall through the floor, and the floorboards creak ominously. Various wings and stairwells have rotted out completely, turning the house into a minefield. The high tide regularly threatens to whisk the house, set on the end of a peninsula, out to sea. Despite the its decaying conditions, the house continues to function as a hotel run by Angela's father, Edward Spencer, whose name evokes both an icon of Englishness and a critic of empire.[155] The hodgepodge occupants include the Major, some members of the Spencer family, a group of old women who've ceased paying their hotel bills but who remain permanent residents, a few servants, and a steadily increasing collection of cats. Rising political tensions and contracting imperial power make paying guests a rarity and cause the house to become a domestic war zone of private tensions and squabbles. In contrast with *The Last September*, in which the Naylors rarely mention finances or the difficulty in up-keeping Danielstown, the Majestic is beset by financial problems. Political conflict within Ireland dissuades guests from visiting and threatens to ruin the house and the Spencer family.

[155] The name is both like Edmund Spenser and like Edward Spencer Beesly, who was a prominent critic of imperialism and a descendent of the Fitzgerald family in Ireland.

The Majestic differs significantly from Danielstown in its function as a hotel. Although *Troubles* draws on the generic conventions of the Big House novel, he substitutes a hotel for a Big House. For Farrell, however, the hotel catalyzed *Troubles* and he claimed that the setting itself propelled the rest of the novel.[156] This substitution has two effects: it brings to life the myths of the Big House and it amplifies the comic effect of the novel. Danielstown occasionally invokes the comparison to a hotel—during the novel, the house is full of temporary out-of-town guests, the Naylors function a bit like hoteliers, and the form of the novel shares qualities with Bowen's first novel, *The Hotel.*[157] The hotel shares characteristics with Bowen's big house, including being a target of the IRA, housing temporary guests, and recalling a more peaceful and prosperous past.

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[156] In 1967 as he wrote *Troubles*, Farrell reflected that *place* was indispensible to writing a novel. In his diary, Farrell wrote that "[t]he way to approach the writing of a novel is obviously through the form it is to take—once one has that then things can begin to fall into place, having a place to fall into" (108). For Farrell, finding the "place" that *Troubles* would take place was part of his larger project to write a more "universal" novel. America was symbolic of "abrupt changes" in civilization for Farrell, and he saw his time there as a way to explore how ordinary people experience change in their social environments. America also provided the foundation for the setting that Farrell found so important for his novels: the Ocean View Hotel he visited on Block Island in the spring of 1967. There, he found the "fresh start" for *Troubles* in the "charred remains of the Ocean View Hotel which stands, or stood, on a cliff overlooking the old harbor where the ferry comes in" (114). Lavinia Greacen, the editor of Farrell's diaries and letters, has remarked that the Ocean View Hotel was the "catalyst" for *Troubles* and gave him "the structure for the novel" (422n32). Before he visited the Ocean View Hotel, Farrell had the conception of *Troubles* as a novel about the Irish War of Independence, and had been steadily researching the Irish rebellion (108). Only when he landed on the hotel did he believe he had a setting that would accurately reflect his ideas about the war. The Ocean View Hotel may have catalyzed Farrell's work on *Troubles*, but his diaries and letters from the surrounding period suggest that the Block Island hotel was not the sole location that sparked the fictional Majestic. Even after his time in America, Farrell gravitated toward what his friend John Guare called "fleabag hotel[s]" (420-21n15) where occupants were forced to move rooms, and the soundness of windows and doors were unpredictable. In the Belvedere, Farrell found "roaches multiplying in my room at the Belvedere faster than I could control them" (113). The Belvedere had thin walls in common with the Majestic, and Farrell complained in letters to friends that he could hear "threats and arguments coming through the wall" nearly every evening (107). On his return to England, Farrell moved into the Stanley House Hotel, where he wrote, "As I write there is an ominous creaking of bed-springs up above and a piece of white paint has flaked off the ceiling and fallen into my typewriter—I somehow feel this must be significant" (143). The flaking ceiling found a fictional second life in the Majestic, where the collapsing house causes the characters in Troubles to relocate themselves regularly. His life as a hotel guest may also have crystallized his experiences in Ireland and England, where he often felt like a visitor. The "abrupt change" that Farrell experienced in his hotels is part of life in a hotel, as Farrell likely saw it, but it is also part of the Irish War of Independence, as it is represented in his novels.

[157] In *The Hotel*, Bowen's 1927 novel set in a decaying hotel in Italy, she frequently compares the hotel to a dollhouse, where the narrative moves from room to room (108). *The Last September* shares some of these qualities, especially in the first part of the novel, where the chapters move from room to room and character to character, like *The Hotel* and characters lament their lack of privacy (43).

Farrell's novel is much more direct than Bowen's about how the Anglo-Irish are implicated in British colonial violence within Ireland. Farrell set out to write *Troubles* as part of a series of historical novels on empire. Unlike Bowen, Farrell was unambiguous about Ireland's position as a colonial possession. As he set out to write his Empire Trilogy, Farrell described his desire to write a series that would deal with "universal" rather than "regional" concerns, novels "in which people trying to adjust themselves to abrupt changes in their civilization, whether it be Ireland or in Japan, may be able to recognize themselves" (87).[158] While Farrell claims to write about "abrupt change" in a "universal" setting, his novels are hardly abstracted from the "regional." In *Troubles* and the other *Trilogy* novels, large-scale imperial violence and conflicts are filtered through the daily life of interior space.

The violence that is implicit in the language and the rooms in *The Last September* is thus explicit and comedic in the language and rooms of *Troubles*. Whereas Bowen weaves violence into the nostalgic reading of the big house until its (almost surprising) ruin in the final chapter, Farrell opens his novel with the house's destruction and represents the hotel as a site of continual, almost absurdly comic violence. The Majestic also falls apart more impressively than does Danielstown, whose disintegrations are subtler. The Spencers lack the funds or manpower to repair the Majestic, and it continues to slide into decline even as its occupants seem to carry on as usual. The contrast between the condition of the house and the guests' steadfast habits heightens the novel's comic effect. The old women, for example, play cards at night, comforted that "a trump will always be a trump" with an "invincible superiority subject to neither change

[158] Before setting out to write his Empire Trilogy, Farrell applied for a Harkness Fellowship, in which he explained: "[F]or a novelist interested in the way that individuals manage their lives in the middle of the twentieth century, some experience of the US would provide valuable, if not essential, insights. I am deeply interested in trying to write universal, as opposed to regional, novels; the sort of books in which people trying to adjust themselves to abrupt changes in their civilization, whether it be Ireland or in Japan, may be able to recognize themselves." (Application to Dr Lansing V. Hammond, 86-87).

nor decay nor old age," a superiority the text deflates through the apparent deteriorations of both the women and the house (247). Although the house falls apart, the old women treat the deteriorations as routine. Although the Major finds that the house is defamiliarized by its exposure to the exterior world at the end of the novel, events from the "exterior world" (IRA attacks elsewhere in Ireland; news about uprisings in Ireland, Africa, and India) repeatedly intrude on the "interior world" of life inside the Majestic even when the house is still standing. These intrusions unsettle the characters that live in the hotel, despite their attempts to continue life as usual. The arson at the end of the novel is a literal manifestation of war's intrusion into everyday life and its transformative effects on the space of the "Big House." The disorientation the Major feels as he wanders through the charred foundation of the house is a magnification of the disorientation that has been mounting throughout the novel, as events from the outside penetrate the walls of the Majestic and increasingly disrupt its occupants. By the end of the novel, the walls that once separated inside from outside are reduced to rubble. The rooms literally become joined with the outside world, a world from which they were never really insulated in the first place. Both exterior and interior forces cause the Majestic's ruin, and the novel is about these political, personal, and architectural disintegrations. It is not only the Majestic that's left in ruins at the end of the novel; the British Empire itself is described as a ruin.[159]

The decay of the house works as a metaphor for the decay of British rule in Ireland, but it is not merely allegorical. Whereas Woolf tried to restore what she saw the intertwined ruins of empire and of fiction through rebuilding her literary methods, Farrell's novel embraces the ruin – both in its formal approaches and in its arguments about the Irish War of Independence. Rather than try to rebuild interior space as Woolf does, or intertwine violence within the space of the

[159] See p 221, 297, and 54.

"Big House" as Bowen does, Farrell's novel takes on the ruins headfirst, absorbing them into both the style and argument of his historical novel. Whether the decay of the Majestic is organic or a response to guerilla warfare, it signals political upheaval as much as it contributes to political upheaval. Through its representation of the unsettled interior of the Majestic, *Troubles* critiques the stability of colonial control. In subtle moments, this manifests as organic decay between the boundaries of interior and exterior worlds, like a storm blowing the roof off the servants' quarters and killing the pigs living in the backyard squash court, or the Major finding a decaying sheep's head in his bedside table. In other moments, the deterioration is explicitly the result of political violence, as when the IRA bombs the statue of Queen Victoria stationed at the front of the Majestic. Edward Spencer complains that the IRA has destabilized his life in Ireland to such an extent that he claims, "I'd welcome a holocaust. Since they want destruction, give it to them. I'd like to see everything smashed and in ruins so that they really taste what destruction means. Things have gone so far in Ireland now that that's the only way they can be settled with justice, by reducing everything to rubble" (221). As Edward sees it, the dilapidation of the house (and with it, the dilapidation of the patriarchal values that keep the house stable, such as the existence of a "gun room" in which women are not allowed) are expressly related to the overall "destruction" of Ireland, in which there is no other option but "reducing everything to rubble." For him, destabilizing colonial powers is akin to an invitation for a complete holocaust, rather than simply a reorientation.

The decay in interior spaces acts as a reminder of exterior change; if the residents refuse to move out of the house, they must at least move inside the house. The narrator notes, "the residents adapted themselves remarkably well to the nomadic existence of moving from room to room whenever plumbing or furniture happened to fail them" (291). While the guests might see

the decay of the house as "organic," the text suggests that even organic decay is related to the political climate. Their migrations from room to room are explicitly described in terms of war when the Major ironically remarks that moving from room to room in the Majestic is not so difficult for him because the trenches made him accustomed to frequent relocations: "the Major had the advantage of already having become accustomed during the war to an atmosphere of change, insecurity and decay" (218). The atmosphere in the trenches, the Major notices, is as variable, as insecure, and as full of decay as life in the Majestic, a space that he had initially presumed would be a relief from the war. Both the trenches and the Majestic disorient their occupants; both register the upheaval produced by violent political conflict; and both were built to serve military or nationalistic functions. Neither the structural interior of the house nor the Major's experience of its interior is stable.[160] The house is architecturally destabilized as it falls apart and the Major is emotionally unsettled, feeling "confused" and "absent-minded." The house's "atmosphere of change, insecurity and decay" feeds and feeds off this sensation (406).

Figuratively, the Majestic is a local battlefield, where the hotel's rooms take on qualities of the trenches. On a local level, the Anglo-Irish guests experience the instability of the hotel through their migrations between rooms; on a global level, the house's deterioration signals a shift in how the Anglo-Irish will occupy Ireland. If they try to remain in Ireland as they have, they must adopt a "nomadic existence." The novel continues to link explicitly the Major's experience in World War I with the experience of living in the Majestic, despite the occupants' overt insistence that life will continue as usual. As he dodges the house falling around him, the Major is reminded of his time in the military. His anxiety about needing to relocate constantly in the house forces him to "consider that this compulsion might stem from the irrational fear that a

[160] "On his way to bed the Major, who had by now stayed in so many different rooms at the Majestic that he very often became confused, absent-mindedly presented himself at the door of a room he had been occupying a few days earlier" (406).

French-mortar shell was about to land in the spot where he had been standing" (297). His shell-shock is of course two-fold: it's an anxiety resulting from not just one war but from two.[161] The house's falling shingles are a reminder of bombs from battlefields past but they are also the threat of bombs from battlefields present, as IRA presence in Kilnalough expands.

As the novel progresses, the vocabularies of domestic life and lived space collide with the vocabulary of political violence. Farrell's use of military terms to describe interior space evokes Bowen's representation of Danielstown's land and dining room, where she uses the language of occupation to describe the house's interior. In *Troubles*, accounts of domestic conflicts are frequently peppered with the language of military operations: the house is occupied by "an army of cats," the Major is "patrolling restlessly" through the corridors; the house is described in terms of "turrets and battlements"; and its land is "strung with brambles like trip-wires" (164). As the political violence intensifies, the collision of domestic and military space becomes almost comic by virtue of its absurdity. The Major describes a scene at the dinner table where "revolvers [were] to be laid out with the knives and forks" (413) and during dinner, a guest "took the lid off the sugar-bowl in front of him. Instead of lumps of sugar it contained a pile of dully glistening metal lozenges…revolver bullets. Making a droll face he picked one up, dropped it into his coffee and began to stir it with the barrel of the revolver beside his plate" (424). In this scene, domestic and martial objects exchange functions. Guns are not merely side-by-side with the cutlery; they actually *become* cutlery when guests use revolvers to stir not sugar—but bullets—into their coffee. The threat of political violence interrupts domestic routines, but Farrell's parodic approach suggests that the Majestic is so habituated to violence within the house that they hardly notice the difference between a sugar cube and a bullet in their evening tea.

[161] The Major's shell-shock also recalls Septimus's shell-shock in that the space of the house or the street evoke the trenches for both.

The novel's form works as a reminder of the interrelation between domestic and political turmoil to suggest that even if the guests of the Majestic want to cordon themselves off from Ireland's political conflict, this political conflict is already part of the house's interior. Perhaps more importantly, the political conflict in Ireland is frequently contextualized in relation to Britain's larger imperial project and the ensuing violence involved in decolonization. The narrative is interrupted by news of international violence and war crimes; newspaper clippings reference the American civil war, Trotsky, the Bolsheviks, and Indian unrest, among others. These articles are interspersed at irregular intervals, though they often follow long accounts of domestic conflicts over things like card games and stray cats in the house, as if to remind the reader of the tension between the stability characters seek within the drawing-room and the reality of imperial conflict that threatens to undermine this stability on the level of the room, the home, and their relation to Ireland. These news articles, with titles like "Lawlessness Near Kilkenny," "South African Affairs," and 'Trouble in India" remind readers, or even the occupants of the Majestic, of the broader imperial context of the nationalist struggle in Ireland. Often, the news clippings that report the dilapidation of Anglo-Irish rule seem related to moments where the dilapidation of the house remind the Major and Edward that they are living in a site of ruin. Interruptions to the narrative's progress signal other kinds of interruptions: to the interior of the house and to the process of colonization in Ireland.

Violence is written into the novel's landscape as much as it is written into the landscape of the Majestic. At one point, a guest taking her tea outside the hotel has her tea table smashed by the letter "M" of the Majestic's sign falling off the building's façade. The news stories function a bit like this falling letter, in that they sometimes seem like non-sequiturs dropped in the narrative. The news clippings and the falling tiles, lettering, and walls are evidence of the

"outside" coming in, disrupting the stability that readers or guests might seek. The space of the novel itself, littered as it is with fragments of news and other narratives, is a site of ruin, where pieces of history fall from the sky into the text like the "M" of the Majestic's sign falling into a guest's teacup. Yet the interruption works as a reminder that the Majestic is subject to the violent political change that takes place in the rest of Ireland, which is also part of Britain's larger imperial conflict. One news article goes so far as to explicitly connect the local conflict with more global imperial encounters: "There was ample evidence that what was going on in Ireland was connected with what was going on in Egypt and India" (177). On several levels, the novel shows that the political troubles that plague Ireland, especially colonial resistance, are part of the political troubles of other colonized spaces. If the reader forgets that Ireland's struggle for independence is part of a larger global context of decolonization and revolt against British control, then these formal interruptions to the story's progress are the narrative equivalent of the tiles and plaster that fall from the Majestic's roof onto its occupants' heads. They work as visual and contextual reminders of the global context.

In certain scenes, war is disorienting because it disrupts the gendered spaces that were more conventionally preserved in peaceful times. The war erodes the spatial divisions that once protected and separated masculine and feminine territories. Sitting in the gun room, the Major considers how the space should be "a masculine preserve" but that the war had blurred "the distinction between the sexes…Many young women were crack shots, the Major had heard" (220). The sanctity of the "masculine preserve," is deteriorated by the events of the war. The war rewrites the gun room from a space of masculine authority to one where women might just as easily "fire off both barrels without batting an eyelid" (220). The new space of the house reflects the disintegration of formerly more intact boundaries.

The Majestic also seems to afford little psychological privacy to its occupants. The Major wants the Irish War of Independence and its attendant violence to be contained as a private matter. When Edward shoots a boy in the backyard (presumably a "Shinner"), the Major tells the doctor who arrives that the "poor boy was the victim of a private hatred and despair" (431). In this moment, the Major categorizes the violence as a "private" problem. While Edward's "hatred and despair" toward Sinn Fein may have played out in the privacy of the Majestic's backyard, the private conflict about land is rooted in larger national conflicts. Decay in the house itself often signals decay in characters' psychological conditions. Both house and protagonist share similar-sounding names always preceded by an article ("The Major" and "The Majestic"). As Fiona MacPhail has argued, the Major and the Majestic have "intimately connected" fates: "Their apotheosis and fall coincide, and just as the Majestic never disappears but remains as a ruin even when burnt to the ground, so the Major comes back from death by drowning" (244). Edward also experiences personal decay through architectural decay, suggested by how he and the house seem to exchange grammatical places: "Underfoot loose floorboards creaked and shifted ominously. 'If I get dry rot I'm done for,' Edward continued as if still discussing his health" (181). In the novel, "dry rot" stands in for mental deteriorations—the upper stories of the Majestic rot first, evoking the decay of Edward's "upper stories," as his mind begins to decompose. The Major thinks Edward is "beginning to go to pieces" and worries about "the deterioration in Edward's state of mind" (304, 413). In both cases, Edward's declining mental house is inextricable from the house's physical decline. We can read the house not merely as an extension of Edward or of the Major, but as a "living organism," as Lefebvre would have it, "bound up with function and structure" (94).

In *Troubles*, personal relationships also disorient the characters, effecting change in their perspectives on politics and their experience of the space of the house.[162] For the Major, falling in love with Sarah, a Catholic and strident Nationalist, disorients his presumed political sympathies with the Anglo-Irish. Sarah openly argues with the Major in an attempt to reorient his views, responding to his idea that the Easter Rebellion was "the treacherous attack by Irish hooligans" by telling him that the British are "a force of occupation in Ireland against the wishes of the people" (81) and that the Major's version of the Easter Uprising was proof that the "ignorant" English "clearly know nothing" (82). After listening to Sarah's version of events, the Major starts to think that making sense of the political climate in Ireland "was like putting out to sea in a small boat: with the running of the waves it is impossible to tell how far one has moved" (139). Several months later, he defends to Edward the motives of the IRA looting the gardens at night: "They have nothing to eat. What d'you expect…you can't expect someone willingly to starve to death" (219). By the novel's end, the Major openly sympathizes with Sinn Fein.[163] The Major's conflicted political perspective echoes that of Lois or Laurence in *The Last September*, who find themselves caught between personal sympathy for their Irish neighbors and their vested interest in the British occupation.

Like Lois, the Major is oriented in alternative ways toward the conventions of marriage, family, reproduction, and national belonging. Although Lois views her profusion of choice with optimism, the Major seems to see his future as more dismal and the Major's disorientation within romantic relationships frequently evoke his larger ambivalence about national belonging. When

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[162] Robert Garratt has argued that the women of *Troubles* represent different nations in their states of growth and decline: Angela, symbolic of Unionism, atrophies and dies in the first chapters of the novel while Sarah, symbolic of the Irish Revival and Nationalism, grows increasingly healthy, eventually leaving her wheelchair to hike through the countryside and dance late into the night. While we can read the women symbolically, as Garratt does, we can also see how the Major's political and personal orientations change as he spends more time with Sarah and less with Angela.

[163] See, for example, his conversation with the doctor, 407.

it comes to romance, Farrell's third-person narrator remarks that, "It was clear that he [the Major] was a traveller through unmapped country" (252) and "the Major, with neither chart nor compass, was thus wandering at large through the minefields of love" (254). The language of spatial confusion echoes other moments in which the Major is lost: migrating from room to room (218), feeling as insecure in the house as he did in the trenches (218), presenting himself at the wrong bedroom door at night (406), wandering through the ashes of the hotel at the end of the novel (458). Like Lois, the Major feels disoriented, not only by the political conflict surrounding him, but also in his personal relationships. He experiences love like a "minefield," a metaphor that has a disturbingly literal resonance for a war veteran. The Major's general disorientation, produced by two wars and life at the Majestic, bleeds into his personal life. In *The Last September*, Lois regrets her isolation from much of the violence of the war; she complains that she "might as well be in some kind of cocoon" (66). Yet as Beth Wightman argues, the threat of violence is ubiquitous, even if it is obscured: in Bowen's novel, the IRA is "unidentifiable, unlocatable, yet ever-present" (54). In *Troubles*, Farrell literalizes Lois's complaint that she lives in a "cocoon," isolated from the war. Toward the end of the novel, the Major increasingly spends his time inside a linen closet in the Majestic. This closet suggests the uncertain direction of his sexuality. Like Lois, the Major expresses interest in the opposite sex, but refuses what Ahmed calls the "straight tendencies" to marry and reproduce (560). Although he seems to love first Angela and then Sarah, these relationships are both unfulfilled. His attachment to the closet suggests his repressed sexuality in the closet's resemblance to a vaginal canal or womb: "long and narrow and rather dark" and during certain times of day, very moist, "positively tropical" (263-64). In this enclosed, small, hot space, the Major lies "naked on a pile of blankets" thinking that the closet is "a huge, warm and slightly dusty nest" (264). Safely enclosed in a closet, the

Major allows himself to fantasize about Sarah in a way he does not when he occupies the other rooms of the house. The sexual atmosphere of the hot closet influences his mental space, allowing him the mental room to daydream. While he seeks out the sanctity of the closet as a place "be alone in order to think clearly," his isolation from both personal and political conflicts is short-lived, of course, and eventually the violence and disintegration visited upon the house extract the Major, as they did Lois, from the security of his cocoon (263). The novel ends with the Major alighting from Kilnalough on a train to an unknown destination, where he, like the remains of the Majestic, is exposed to the unknown in the larger exterior world.

Danielstown and the Majestic in Proximity

Although their novels approach the "Big House" differently, Bowen and Farrell's biographical commonalities reflect their shared approach to Anglo-Irish dislocation. Both remarked that being Anglo-Irish was a disorienting position where they felt neither Irish nor English, part of both nations but unable to call either home.[164] Both sympathize with the disorientation their characters feel in their personal relationships, in their futures, and in the midst of political conflict in Anglo-Irish houses. Aside from their national backgrounds, Bowen and Farrell experienced other kinds of exclusion that might have caused them to feel like outsiders, resistant to easy categorization. As a young man, Farrell had polio and spent months in an iron lung, which caused him to limp for the rest of his life. And as an Anglo-Irish woman, Bowen seemed to experience in more than one way what Jane Marcus has called "the woman

[164] In her biographical study of Bowen, Ellmann explores Bowen's family history of dislocation. She argues that Bowen, like the Naylors in *The Last September*, was "estranged from both the English and the Irish" (57). Though the Bowens were Anglo-Irish landlords, they did not support the "Act of Union" that legally united Ireland with England, but neither were they passionate about Irish Nationalism. Biographically, Bowen and Farrell share their characters' political ambivalence. Ronald Binns argues that Farrell felt "in Ireland he was always regarded as English but that in England he was always treated as if he was Irish"(qtd in Crane 180).

writer's elsewhereness" (Marcus qtd in Lassner 16). Bowen felt marginalized for personal, as well as political, reasons. Given the deterioration of the "Big House" and its uncertain future in 1920, it's unsurprising that Bowen and Farrell populated their novels with migratory characters whose futures are as uncertain as the future of the houses they live in.

Both Lois and the Major appear in Ireland seemingly out of nowhere. Lois arrives in Danielstown from an unnamed boarding school and the reader similarly encounters the Major en route to the Majestic from another temporary location. As he travels to the Majestic for the first time, the Major thinks that his fiancée's letters had described the place for him so thoroughly, "he almost felt as if he were going home. And this was fortunate because by this time, except for an elderly aunt in Bayswater, he had no family of his own to go to" (9). Both Lois and the Major have only distant family members left in the world and neither seems to have a sense of home. Orphaned, Lois is without family both biologically and nationally. She feels neither Irish nor English; she cannot "conceive of her country emotionally: it was a way of living, abstract of several countrysides, or an oblique, frayed island moored at the north but with an air of being detached and drawn out west from the British coast" (42). Ireland, for Lois, is not "emotional"; that is, she does not identify herself with the Irish. Instead, Ireland is a "way of living." Although she does not have emotional attachment to Ireland as a home, neither does she attach herself to England, describing her home in Ireland as "detached and drawn out" from the "British coast." The residents of Danielstown speak of the English and the Irish with the same sense of removal—they do not identify themselves fully with either group.[165] Although Lois dates a British soldier, she expresses irritation with both the British and the Irish: "England is so moral,

[165] The characters speak of both nationalities with the same sense of distance. For example, Myra Naylor says, "Really altogether, I think all English people very difficult to trace" (80). At times, the characters play at being Irish; at tea at Mrs. Fogarty's, surrounded by Union Jack cushions, the woman "felt very easy and very Irish—the qualities radiated, perhaps, from Mrs. Fogarty" (102). And Mr. Montmorency and Marda are aware momentarily of "being a little vulgar, a little English" (128).

so dreadfully keen on not losing her temper…Can you wonder this country gets irritated?" (66). Both Lois and the Major seem split in their political sympathies; both novels tread a path between unionist and nationalist sentiments. Yet this position affords them more expansive sympathy, the rare ability to modulate between loyalties.

To conclude, I want to consider the stakes of Farrell's parodic rewriting of the Big House novel in historical relation to *The Last September*. Why, for example, did Farrell set his novel forty years previously, during the War of Independence, and not in the sixties during the Troubles in Northern Ireland? One clue may be in Farrell's response to Bowen's review of *Troubles*. In a diary entry, Farrell reports that Bowen's review of his novel "pleased me very much because she was the only person who noticed, or bothered to say, that I was trying to write about now as well as then" (*Letters* 217). Farrell argued that he wrote *Troubles* not just as retrospective historical fiction but as a simultaneously backward- and forward-looking narrative about Ireland's political conflicts. Farrell's title, of course, was a nod to both the conflicts of 1919-1921, and the conflicts of the late 1960's and early 70's. The spatial problems at stake in Bowen's 1929 novel—upheaval in the Big House, debate over the geographic boundaries of the (future) Republic of Ireland, questions of national belonging for both Irish and Anglo-Irish—remain a concern in Farrell's novel as well as his contemporary moment.

However, Bowen and Farrell have different approaches to the question of British imperialism and the role of the Anglo-Irish in the history of Irish colonization. Writing in the late twenties, Bowen is more nostalgic and less critical of the Anglo-Irish's position in Ireland. Her personal history, including the loss of Bowen's Court during the war, may have colored her approach to the War of Independence. And yet, the novel shows moments of awareness that Ireland is a colonial possession, a position that would have been unusual at Bowen's historical

moment. As Lois puts it to Gerald, Ireland being protected by the British armies is not only "irritating" but must be "as bad for it as being a woman. I never can see why women shouldn't be hit, or should be saved from wrecks when everybody is complaining they're so superfluous" (66). For Bowen, the deference to Ireland and women masks a contempt or neglect that echoes colonial strategies. In Lois's analogies, Ireland is a woman whose protector is both patronizing and violent. Bowen wrote her novel at a time that was between what Kelsall calls the "decline and fall" of the country house and its resurrection in "the heritage industry" (167). In contrast, Farrell's retrospective distance from the Irish War of Independence and the Civil War might explain his novel's parodic or irreverent tone (167). And yet, the similarities between the novels suggest that the spatial problems that haunted the early part of the century continue to trouble Ireland later in the century. For Farrell, the disorientation he represented at the Majestic was part of a larger pattern he represented in his "Empire Trilogy," which examined the 1857 Indian uprisings and the Japanese invasion of Singapore on the eve of World War II. In *The Siege of Krishnapur*, like *Troubles*, moments of historical colonial violence are staged in seemingly insulated domestic settings (a colonial outpost that seems remote from violence) that nevertheless participate in British imperialism. Disorientation and reorientation mark not only the modernist and late modernist period; these conditions reverberate into the later part of the century, as I will further discuss in the next two chapters.

An attention to the Big House as a site of disorienting political violence affords three major insights: first, characters experience the upheaval of the war and the reconfiguration of their national belonging through changes within their rooms. Secondly, some of the disorienting narrative choices can be understood as a response to the text's relationship to the Big House, which is itself interrupted by colonial violence. Third, if the country house was once seen as a

site of seclusion, safety, or escape from political turmoil, these novels demonstrate that the stability of the domestic interior, as well as the stability of Ireland's national interior, is disrupted, making all the characters exiles, even at home.

Yet even as the disruption of interior boundaries alienates the characters of Bowen's and Farrell's novels, it also introduces new life into Ireland. Such disruptions make room for what seems out of place. If Ireland is like Danielstown's ante-room, then cracking its metaphorical doors opening is both alienating and invigorating. As Bowen wrote several years after *The Last September* was published, Dublin's vitality was thanks to the "continuous influx of foreign life." (*Selected Writings* 31). For Ireland, as for Lois, the influx of "foreign life" is a perpetually opening door, which is disruptive but also expansive.

CHAPTER 3: MAPPING THE POSTCOLONIAL INTERIOR

> "The way the houses build was that people doan' have nothing to do with one another. You can live an' die in yuh room an' the people next door never say boo to you no matter how long you inhabit that place. It ain't like home as you think. I tell you you only got to see how they houses build to see what I mean…the walls look hard, they nasty…you here goin' learn for the first time is what it mean to live in yuh own own room alone without knowing a single soul in any of the other hundred. That is if you can get a room" (75).
>
> - George Lamming, *The Emigrants* (1954)

"Home" is a term with obvious resonances for postcolonial criticism, and many critics have examined the concept of home and displacement through the lens of nationalist narratives. In these readings, home is a national and ideological space, and the physical locations that constitute home are secondary objects of inquiry, if they are examined at all. In writing from foundational thinkers like Benedict Anderson and Gayatri Spivak to recent work by Partha Chatterjee and Paul Gilroy, "home" is a term evoked to signal citizenship. It is a nation-state from which one departs and to which one returns.[166] Yet in postcolonial fiction, especially postwar immigrant fiction, nationalist narratives of "home" are inseparable from local instantiations of home. These homes, often temporary rented rooms, are powerful influences on postcolonial form. In George Lamming's *The Emigrants*, excerpted above, the character Tornado describes "home" as simultaneously a place and a sense of belonging. Tornado's estrangement from England is materialized through his rented room. His observation that "it ain't like home as you think" refers simultaneously to the strangeness of his new country and the strangeness of the room he occupies there. Tornado complains that "if you can get a room" in London, you will die

[166] See Anderson, 58, 147; Spivak, 161, 263, for example. See also Memmi. For more recent work, see Chatterjee, 123 (2010), 94 (2013); Gilroy, 115 (2010), 86 (2002). Salman Rushdie's collection of essays, *Imaginary Homelands*, explores the "homeland" as both geographic and emotional territory, but even then, primarily examines it from a philosophical and theoretical angle, rather than a material one. Even Edward Said, who recognizes "home" as a term with "extremely potent resonances," has little to say about the material or ideological history of home (59).

of the isolation because even "the walls look hard" and you "can live an' die in yuh room and the people next door never say boo" (75). The room is the point of intersection between the "hardness" of the physical space and the "hardness" of the psychological experience of immigration. In this chapter, I examine temporary homes, like Tornado's rented room, and their relationship to narrative style. In particular, I look at the mid-century housing crisis as a way of understanding the disorienting narrative style of migrant narratives writing about home. In novels by Jean Rhys, Sam Selvon, and Doris Lessing, the rented room is a point of intersection between the migrant experience of Englishness and its representation in literary form. In all three novels, recent immigrants live in drafty rented rooms that strongly influence their experience of Englishness. Their stories about home radiate from the drafty and unsettled spaces that they inhabit, producing a narrative style with gaps, elisions, and instability. To put it another way, the draftiness of the rented room is materialized through the draftiness of postwar postcolonial narratives.

While postcolonial critics have thoroughly examined questions of migration and belonging, I want to shift attention to the historical housing crisis as a way of better understanding postcolonial narratives about home. The "search for home" was not merely a convenient metaphor for process of migration; it was, as Lamming articulates, a practical concern in a crowded market. In this chapter, I examine how the housing crisis influenced migrant fiction and how the resulting narratives counter the solidity of nationalist ideology through formal and architectural draftiness. By draftiness, I mean both the quality of being unfinished and the movement of air through a room, a double meaning that Woolf invoked when she complained that the Edwardian novel was a house that was lifeless without any "draughts."[167] In contrast to the implicit imperial narrative that emphasizes unity or wholeness, these migrant

[167] See Woolf, "Character in Fiction."

novels deliberately emphasize draftiness, ruptures, and inconsistencies.[168] These drafts materialize in the rooms that their characters live in and in the form of the novels themselves. I read three immigrant novels that roughly span the middle of the century: Rhys's *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), and Lessing's *In Pursuit of the English* (1961).[169] Although these authors come from different national, racial, and social backgrounds, all three use the boarding house room as a multivalent symbol. It is a space where their characters navigate life in England, where they locate the loss, isolation, and unease they experience as recent arrivals. The shortage of rooms, as Tornado articulates, also symbolizes the shortage of "room" for colonial subjects in England. At the same time, the drafty boarding house is a harbinger of national change—England is not a tidy national home, but a disorderly amalgam of populations, stories, and people. The boarding house room embodies the contradictions attendant on immigrant life: it is a space of stability and impermanence, of security and violence, of attachment and alienation. The "draftiness" in these novels is both a way to make sense of these contradictions and a way to resist imperial and national wholeness embodied in the conception of "home."

A Brief History of the Boarding House

Through the late 1950's, London experienced a major housing shortage that accelerated the growth of the lodging house. During WWII, London lost hundreds of thousands of homes and the city did not move quickly to restore and repair these sites after the war. Well-intentioned

[168] I follow from Kurt Koenigsberger's thesis in *The Novel and the Menagerie: Totality, Englishness, and Empire*, where he argues that the British imperial narrative relied on the idea that the British empire was an omniscient, comprehensive totality. See also Said, 23.

[169] Though Rhys published *Voyage in the Dark* several decades before Selvon and Lessing's novels, this novel prefigures much of her later work on immigration and the search for housing, and her representation of the exiled Anna Morgan dovetails with Selvon's and Lessing's characters.

but flawed government policies for building council housing restricted licenses for building and selling homes.[170] Between a halt on construction and the Blitz, almost half a million homes were destroyed or damaged to the point of being uninhabitable.[171] The influx of population into the city after the war only aggravated the demand for housing in a moment when homes were in unusually short supply. Political and ideological conflicts about council housing made it a struggle for citizens, seniors, immigrants, and families with children to find adequate affordable housing. Building new facilitates was complicated, and while London planned to expand available housing, it faced intense criticism about slum clearance and redevelopment.[172] During this time, Parliament passed a series of new housing acts, including the Leasehold Reform Act, the Rent Act, and numerous revised Housing Acts, to address the housing shortages and living conditions.[173]

The 1948 Nationality Act, which ensured that individuals born in the Commonwealth had British citizenship, harkened a period of increased immigration from the British colonies into London.[174] The *Empire Windrush*, a ship carrying 493 passengers from Jamaica to England, arrived the same year the Act was passed and became emblematic of that historical moment and the generation of Jamaicans that arrived with it. Jockeying with working class white families, immigrants faced some of the worst housing conditions. By 1956, migration from the Caribbean to London was at its peak but the housing crisis was far from resolved.[175] Many West Indian and Asian settlers faced poor, unsanitary, or temporary conditions, including dwellings without hot

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[170] Paul Balchin writes, "London had a substantial housing shortage, numerous and large bombed sites and extensive areas of unfit housing" (62).
[171] See A.E. Holman's *Housing Policy in Britain*, Chapter IV. He adds that house building came to a virtual halt during the war and the numbers of households continued to grow, contributing to the shortage. By other accounts, about a million people lost their homes
[172] See Paul Balchin, p. 62.
[173] See www.legislation.gov.uk
[174] See Kathleen Paul, chapter 1.
[175] See Trevor Lee, p. 13. Almost 30,000 West Indians arriving in Great Britain in 1956.

water, showers, or private toilets.[176] Even for white Londoners, the housing market was often inadequate or exploitative, though this history has received wider critical attention than the housing shortages for immigrants.[177] The shortage of suitable residences heightened racial tensions and contributed to the sense of alienation that many immigrants felt when they arrived in England. The feeling of "not being at home" was amplified by the material reality of not having a home. The Windrush generation found that England did not welcome them as equal subjects; instead, the "home-country" had neither room nor rooms for them.[178]

Boarding houses were a key site of experience for immigrants during the postwar housing crisis. Historically, boarding houses or lodging houses were run by widows or families looking to supplement their income by informally taking on boarders.[179] In legal terms, the boarding house occupied a unique position especially for women because it allowed them to work, but the house remained a residence. In the mid-nineteenth century, the General Register Office conducted a census in which it registered definitions for private lodging houses as well as institutional lodgings (including orphanages, work houses, and hospitals). For the boarding house, however, the Register was ambivalent, and ended up classifying the space as an "intermediate form between the institution and the private family."[180] This ambivalence caused the registrar anxiety; government authorities accused boarders of having "abundant energy with potential for both work and violence" and "budding sexuality with its potential for 'unregulated' reproduction."[181] From single-room rentals to boarding houses that slept 5-10 lodgers, the boarding house was

[176] See George Tremlett, p. 41.
[177] See, for example, the 1978 publication on "Private Housing and the Working Class" that lamented the rundown houses rented to "students or nurses at exploitative rents" (6).
[178] The term "home-country" pinpoints the intersection between private and public belonging. See Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics Of Home: Postcolonial Relocations And Twentieth-century Fiction*.
[179] See Trevor Lee.
[180] *Census*. 1851. General Report, p. xxxiv. From Sandra Burman, 78.
[181] See Burman, 78.

both a private family space and a regulated public space.[182] *In Pursuit of the English*, for instance, is set in a boarding house run by a family of Italian immigrants who live in the basement and rent six or more upstairs rooms. In this arrangement, the boarding house was both a private family home and a commercial lodging house, blurring the boundaries between public and private spaces. Even when lodgers had their own rooms, they often shared kitchens, washrooms, and other public spaces.

As a symbolic space, the boarding house occupies contested territory. Neither private nor public, neither stable nor entirely temporary, the boarding house is caught between community and privacy, between belonging and homelessness. The occupants of boarding houses—primarily immigrants, unmarried women, and young people—were also marginalized in the mid-twentieth century.[183] The BBC documentary "The West Indian Front Room" explores how West Indian immigrants often squeezed whole families into one- or two-room "apartments" in lodging houses. These tightly-packed spaces offered respite from the violence and racism of the streets. In the boarding house, these residents can "be at home" and yet these drafty or inadequate rooms were also stark reminders of their status in England. Kathleen Paul describes the "theoretical equality of the imperial nationality," which in reality produced two spheres of national identity: "an inclusive formal nationality policy and an exclusive informal national identity" (13). The latter, "informal" national identity is the exclusive purveyance of the white British, which forms a counter-current to official policy that welcomes immigrants from British colonies. These "two spheres" result in part from the anxiety about contamination, crime, limited post-war resources, and national identity that caused many white British citizens to try to formally or informally

[182] See Webster or Lund, for example.
[183] Burman, 78-79. There is also a genre of mid-century novels about women in boarding houses, like Barbara Pym's *Quartet in Autumn* and Elizabeth Taylor's *Mrs. Palfrey at the Claremont*.

deauthorize the subjecthood of colonial immigrants.[184] As Paul Gilroy describes, English newspaper reports in the forties and fifties stoked anxiety about immigrants' criminal behavior, sexual offenses, and interracial relationships (71). In all novels I examine, boarding houses vary, from large hostels in *The Lonely Londoners* to a shared floor on a duplex in *Voyage in the Dark*. In these texts, the boarding house space is a metaphor for the immigrant experience, but it is also implicitly and explicitly compared to England itself. Both are a collection of people under one "roof," a territory where privacy and insularity give way to mixture and occasionally chaos, and a home where belonging is often temporary and always changing. In each of the three novels I read, the characters move within and between boarding houses—often moving from one set of lodgings to another, or from room to room within a single boarding house. Migration to England becomes the impetus for migration within England, as the characters perpetually relocate themselves, relocating their sense of "home" in the process.

Boarding houses are sites of mobility that shape their occupants experience of "home" on a material and figurative level. In all three texts, recent arrivals look to boarding houses to provide a sense of "home" in England, but these temporary spaces do not anchor them in England. Instead, they re-experience their disorientation in England at large through their disorientation in the winding hallways and derelict rooms of boarding houses. While other critics have read postcolonial mobility through the city's public spaces, I argue that interior rooms are just as important in providing insight about how the "home" is both shaped and unsettled by private space.[185] I argue that these spaces—and the texts that describe them—are drafty. Draftiness is a useful term because it captures how the boarding house is caught in a threshold: the room is enclosed yet open to currents of air; the inhabitants are caught between belonging

[184] See, for instance, Paul Gilroy, Guy Ortolano, and Mark Clapson.
[185] See Ian Baucom or Paul Gilroy, for example.

and alienation, between fixity and mobility, between the desire for stability and the reality of constant change. In all three texts, the draftiness of the narration style follows from the draftiness of life in the boarding house.[186] For Rhys, her repetitive prose echoes the unvaried and ever-changing rooms she inhabits. In Selvon's novel, his narrative voice travels between characters like sound travels between the walls of buildings. In Lessing's semi-auto-biography, the apparent disjunctions in her writing style can be explained as responses to the disorienting conditions of material life in Flo's boarding house.

My intervention in the critical conversation is threefold: first, I use the drafty boarding house room as a way to explain drafty narrative strategies, from repetitive prose to an inconsistent use of genre. I attend to the experimental, disorienting, or disjunctive stylistic choices as a response to the unstable rooms of late modernist and mid-century London boarding houses. Secondly, I explore how postwar and post-imperial narratives intersect with the housing crisis as it is represented in mid-century migrant fiction. Few critics have examined the overlap between the Welfare State and postwar Britain. Jordanna Bailkin, one of the few to address the relationship between post-imperial and postwar histories, has argued that the two phenomena were "intertwined" even as they produced "discordant emotional registers" (22, 21).[187] The housing crisis was a historical moment when tensions about immigration collided with post-war anxieties and shortages. The critical attention to housing in relation to immigration and postcolonial representations of Englishness is a surprising blind spot for both literary and historical critics. Claire Langhamer, for example, explores the "Meanings of Home in Postwar

[186] See Gail Low, Chris GoGwilt, or Erica Johnson, for discussions of the unusual narrative styles of the three authors.

[187] Bailkin asserts that the histories of the postwar and post-imperial have perhaps been kept separate because "the welfare state represented a triumph of optimism" and the post-imperial "the exact opposite" (21-22). By seeing these two phenomena as "simultaneous," she presents a bigger picture of the 1950's in particular as attending to two different but coincident trends.

Britain" without once addressing immigration. For Langhamer and others, the changes to home are exclusively changes to the role of women in the home, the shift to suburban housing for white Londoners, and post-war anxieties about privacy, coziness, and security.[188] The critical debate about the middle of the century is often divided between those like Langmaher, who focus on white middle class London, and critics who focus instead on immigration, decolonization, and race primarily through changing policies or public spaces.[189] By viewing the two histories as simultaneous, even if they were often at odds, I draw together several disparate threads of criticism, reading post-war and post-imperial migrant histories in a multi-racial way that allows me to examine Black British writers like Sam Selvon alongside white South African immigrants like Doris Lessing. Thirdly, I want to contextualize these migrant narratives as part of a larger conversation about being "at home" in England. Ian Baucom has shown that Englishness is "dispersed" via colonial expansion, and that such dispersal has contributed to the collapse of a "stable definition of what it means to be English" (220). My method takes Baucom almost in reverse: rather than explore the "dispersal" of symbolic English spaces across the globe, as Baucom does, I examine how this dispersal of identity is experienced at home, for both black and white immigrants to England. In contrast with Woolf's representation of Englishness as constructed in relation to a vast imagined colonial network, Rhys, Selvon, and Lessing represent this colonial network as immersed in London and produced in conjunction with Englishness. If the late modernist period was a time of post-imperial decline in which authors re-narrated Englishness, as Jed Esty has argued, then I want to contend that the middle of the century is a counterpoint to this earlier sense of "contraction." The unsettling expansion of Englishness was,

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[188] See also George Tremlett, Frederick Shaw, and John Short.

[189] For the former, see Zachary Leader or George Tremlett; for the latter, see Roger Lockhearst, John McLeod, or Gail Low. An exception would be Graham MacPhee whose *Postwar British Literature and Postcolonial Studies* addresses both civilization and the end of empire, and decolonization and nationalism; however, even MacPhee divides his text into sections that examine race, and sections that examine class.

of course, not straightforward and was rarely a welcomed change—revised nationality acts sought to curb immigration and citizenship privileges, among other backlash.[190] Yet despite the shortages and anxieties, the postwar and post-imperial period was a time when Englishness was renegotiated and expanded by migration.[191]

Perpetually Changing, Perpetually the Same in Jean Rhys's Voyage in the Dark

In *Voyage in the Dark*, Anna Morgan is an immigrant who is dislocated from family, citizenship, and her own sense of self. The novel, written in first person, narrates Anna's repeated migration among boarding houses. Anna experiences England as a series of relocations: "You were perpetually moving to another place which was perpetually the same" (8). "Home" for Anna is simultaneously unvarying and constantly changing. The narrative voice, repetitive and yet constantly shifting, is an attempt to make sense of Anna's experience searching for housing in London. The reader experiences the novel as a series of relocations, in which Anna's recurrent phrasing and disorienting self-descriptions follow from the ever-changing but ever-the-same space of Anna's rooms. The novel's language not only describes repetition, it *performs* it by repeating passages about repetition. The effect of this repetitive language and structure is that readers feel like lost travelers in the novel, turning the corner only to arrive at a place that looks like where they started.

Although this chapter focuses on the postwar novel, I have chosen to include Rhys's interwar novel for two reasons: firstly, *Voyage in the Dark* is deliberately in conversation with

[190] For instance, the Representation of the People Act of 1918, the Equal Franchise Act of 1928,the Housing Act of 1957, the Leasehold Reform Act 1967, Housing Subsidies Act 1967, Rent Act 1968, the Housing Act of 1969, to name just a few.

[191] This argument is more similar to that posed by John Marx in *The Modernist Novel and the Decline of Empire* (2005), who argues that during the Cold War, Britishness became globalized through the economic and cultural dominance of the U.S. My argument, clearly, has less to do with Britain's relationship with U.S. hegemonic forces, and more to do with the relationship between former British territories and England in remapping cultural and literary territories.

Rhys's postwar novels and their descriptions of imperial space and housing crises.[192] Although Rhys's historical and racial context is different than that of Selvon or Lessing, *Voyage in the Dark* expressly prefigures Rhys's later, more directly anti-colonial novels.[193] Further, it is the first in a series of novels that draws on Rhys's biographical experience to portray the life of a West Indian migrant in Europe. Unlike Rhys's later novels, however, *Voyage in the Dark* is set in London, which allows me to draw more direct comparisons between Rhys's experience of Englishness and the experience of Selvon and Lessing. In this section, I examine how the repetitive and fragmentary style of *Voyage in the Dark* follows from the liminal space of Anna's boarding house rooms, where her behavior is policed but never protected, where she is isolated without privacy, and where endless repetition never breeds familiarity. I argue that this disorienting style is a response to historical housing conditions and an attempt to navigate the contradictory desires for rootedness and migration that permeate Anna's experience in England.

Although it has very few significant plot points, the novel is loosely about Anna's emigrating from Dominica to England after the death of her father. Anna, who is born to a British father and (presumably) white West Indian mother in Dominica, is orphaned and left under the care of a (stereotypically) cold and self-serving stepmother, who brings Anna back to England with her. In England, Anna works for a while as a chorus girl, but after meeting Walter, an older married man who takes Anna as his lover, Anna leaves the chorus and relies on Walter

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[192] Several critics have also advanced this argument; i.e. Jon Hegglund (118-119) or Anne Simpson (1-21).

[193] Anna Morgan's sense of tired repetition resounds throughout Rhys's oeuvre, especially the four novels Rhys published between 1928 and 1939, all of which follow a lost young woman moving from room to room in various European cities as she escapes one disastrous love affair after the next. In *Good Morning Midnight*, Sasha Jensen complains that wherever she goes, there are "[a]lways the same stairs, always the same room" (145). Sasha's complaint is rehashed in Anna's repeated complaint that the dark houses are "all alike all stuck together" (17). Pierrette Frickey argues that four protagonists of these novels "are manifestations of the same psychological type—so much so that if we read the novels in the order of their internal chronology, we find in them one, fairly sequential story, albeit the principal figure suffers a change of name from novel to novel" (104). This chapter focuses on *Voyage in the Dark* both because it is set in London, which allows for more direct comparison with Selvon and Lessing, but also because it most closely focuses on the space of the boarding house.

for financial support. After he cuts off contact with her, Anna is bereft and ill, can no longer afford her apartment, and ends up living with a friend who encourages Anna to work as a prostitute with her out of their shared apartment. When Anna gets pregnant, she writes to Walter to ask for money for an abortion, which is badly botched and nearly kills her. Throughout the novel, Anna is an aimless and slippery figure, and the reader's muddled sense of her character is intensified by the novel's narrative style, which has been called "highly fragmentary" and "uneasy."[194] Despite Anna's frequent relocations—she moves at least seven times in the narrative span of about a year—she never seems to get anywhere, either psychologically or geographically. Andrew Thacker has argued that Anna "must shuttle between different geographical projections of her identity," never reaching the "security of home" (207). Her rooms—the spaces that most closely afford Anna a "home"—are indistinguishable from one another, disorienting both Anna and the reader. The "security of home" is, of course, a fiction that exists only in Anna's imagination. Both her home in the West Indies and her home(s) in London undergo a series of transformations in the space of the novel and neither offer her the stability that she presumably seeks throughout her migrations.

Much of the critical work on Rhys focuses on *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Rhys's anti-colonial politics. Although there is relatively little criticism on *Voyage in the Dark* compared to Rhys's other novels, much of the current work sees *Voyage in the Dark* as a precursor to her later, more polished political work.[195] For example, Erica Johnson, who remarks that Rhys's style is "broken and fragmented," describes the novel as a "travel narrative" in which Anna is exiled

[194] Dell'Amico, 2.

[195] See Nagihan Haliloglu, Erica Johnson, and Elaine Savory, all of whom analyze *Voyage in the Dark* as a postcolonial narrative of exile, in which they contest Anna's position as resistant or complicit in British empire. Nagihan Haliloğlu observes the "ellipses, contradictions, and fragmentation" that characterize Anna's voice are part of her "attempts to explain herself" in a world that does not listen (73). I agree that Anna struggles to narrate her own experience, but I would argue that the fragments, gaps, and repetitions in her narrative are more persuasively explained as a response to her experience of London vis-à-vis the boarding house, a material concern that has been under-examined in criticism on Rhys.

from both the West Indies and England. While critics like Johnson and others analyze Anna's relationship to "home," "place," and "belonging," I am interested in how the material sites of "home" shape both Anna's experience of England and the novel's stylistic idiosyncrasies. I put Rhys's "broken and fragmented" narrative style into the context of the boarding house history to understand how the draftiness of Rhys's prose follows from the draftiness of her character's physical space.

Rooms in *Voyage in the Dark* are defined by both repetition and sameness. Anna describes a characteristic migration from one room to the next:

> you were perpetually moving to another place which was perpetually the same. There was always a little grey street leading to the stage-door of the theatre and another grey street where your lodgings were, and rows of little houses with chimneys like the funnels of dummy steamers and smoke the same colour as the sky… (8)

In this passage, Anna describes her experience of English housing as both repetitive and unvarying. As a chorus girl, she travels from room to room, finding that each stage-door is located on the same "little grey street" and each room is on "another grey street." The novel's language performs the repetition of rooms through the repetition of words and phrases both within the passage and throughout the text: "perpetually," "grey," "the same," "little." The space itself also repeats—the steamers, the street, the rows of houses, and the sky are all the same color. The language of the novel performs the repetition of Anna's housing in London: "the dark houses all alike frowning down one after the other all alike all stuck together" (17); "all the houses outside in the street were the same—all alike, all hideously stuck together" (103); "everything was always so exactly alike…the houses all exactly alike" (179). The text

emphasizes the sameness of the houses through its recurrent phrasing in describing each new neighborhood and house. This sameness makes one room, one house, one neighborhood indistinguishable from another, disorienting both Anna and the reader.

Rhys's repetitive (at times, even dreary) prose develops out of the historical conditions of everyday life in the boarding house room. If the text is opaque, it is often in response to Anna's experience. The text begins and ends with references to "rebirth" as Anna tries to make a home in England. When she first arrives, Anna reflects that: "It was as if a curtain had fallen, hiding everything I had ever know. It was almost like being born again" (7). At the end of the novel, as she recovers from a botched abortion, Anna hears the doctor's assurance that she will be "ready to start all over again in no time" and observes the light under the door as "the last thrust of remembering before everything is blotted out. I lay and watched it and thought about starting all over again. And about being new and fresh" (187, 188). In both scenes, Anna's "rebirth" is predicated on a death; in the first case, her father has died and in the second, her fetus. In the final scene, the feeling that "everything is blotted out" echoes her initial feeling that "a curtain had fallen, hiding everything." Neither rebirth is a fresh start, as Anna herself recognizes by the end when she repeats that she is "starting all over again, all over again." The text echoes this moment in its form. Because its first half mirrors its second, the text itself seems to start "all over again."[196] Throughout the novel, Anna has false fresh starts in new rooms and new relationships, in a series of highly-repetitive encounters with the same barely-distinguishable uncaring men and the capricious friends. In the first half of the novel, Anna lives with a friend and takes and loses a lover; in its second half, the novel seems to run in reverse. Anna's rootlessness, at first psychological, is increasingly projected onto her material homes. After discovering she is pregnant, Anna begins to feel increasingly adrift, a sensation that also becomes literal as her

[196] Mirrors and mirroring are also a motif in the text, see pp. 13, 23, 29, 38, 84, 95.

pregnancy causes her vertigo. Anna begins to imagine that her bed "was heaving up and down" and she dreams that she is aboard a ship traveling around an island that is partly Dominica and partly England. In the closing section of the novel, Anna begins to hallucinate that the furniture is floating through her room. In these final sections, what seemed figurative in the first section—questions of rebirth, trading sex for money, and Anna's mobility—becomes literal. Anna's aimlessness imprints itself on her personal space to nauseating effect and she imagines furniture levitating and walls drifting. The middle of the novel is the only section in which Anna is clearly located and purposeful, during a long reverie about Morgan's Rest, her father's former estate in Dominica.

If Dominica is stable and colorful, England in contrast is an unlocatable and inconsistent space. When she recalls Dominica, Anna describes it as a series of coordinates, at one point describing it through its precise longitude and latitude on a map. Anna Snaith describes this fixity as "tensed against her repeated images of metropolitan uniformity" (76).[197] Anna finds London to be dispersed and disorienting because "the houses [are] all exactly alike, and the streets going north, south, east west, all exactly alike" (179). This repetition is born out even in the professed "rebirth" at the end of the novel, a birth that is precipitated by death.[198] Repetition in space and style is a hallmark of the novel, in which the "fresh start" is in fact a replay. Compared to her memories of her home at Constance Estate—"everything is green, everywhere things are growing"—her experience of London boarding houses is dank and stagnant. She reflects that "all the bedrooms" she slept in on her chorus tour were the same: "Always a high, dark wardrobe and something dirty red in the room; and through the window the feeling of a

[197] Savory has also commented on the detail of Anna's memories of Dominica, 61. The doctor's assurance that Anna will be able to "start over again" invoke Anna's own false rebirth in the city, suggesting a comparison between the fetus expelled from Anna's womb and Anna herself expelled from her rooms. Whenever she looks to settle in and find a home, she is evicted and forced to find a new place to stay.
[198] See also J. Dillon Brown or Minogue and Palmer.

small street would come in. And the breakfast-tray dumped down on the bed, two plates with a bit of curled-up bacon" (150). These rooms, presumably shared with a roommate (the "two plates") and served by a landlord ("the breakfast-tray dumped") are nevertheless absent of community belonging. These spaces are also mired in contradiction, as is evidenced by a poster in Ethel's house with an image of a girl playing with a "high, dark wall" behind her.[199] Anna compares this wall to England, which she also describes as like "a high, dark wall." This image captures the contradictory sensations of life in England for Anna: she is both shut out and shut in.

Anna's rooms are characterized by repetition and contradiction, and these two qualities are embedded in her experience of England at large. Her familial relationships echo her sense of national belonging—she is caught between belonging and exile. Anna is orphaned but she is not entirely abandoned by family, and she is seduced by men but never finds a partner with whom to form a family of her own.[200] Her abortion at the end of the novel confirms her status as an outsider to the institutions of family and reproduction. Anna's ambiguous racial identity means that she feels too English for Dominica and too Dominican for England. In a letter, Rhys once wrote, "if I said I was English they at once contradicted me—or implied a contradiction—No a colonial—you're not English—inferior being. My mother says colonials aren't ladies and gentlemen" (78).[201] Anna, too, seems unclear where she fits in English space. Although she claims, "I'm a real West Indian" (55), she also resents Hester for "trying to make out that my mother was colored" (65). To the reader, Anna's racial orientation remains blurry—though she

[199] We can also note that the "high, dark wardrobe" echoes the "high, dark wall."
[200] In one dark scene, Anna meets Hester for tea, and Hester shares with Anna a letter from her uncle in which he expresses his outrage that Hester has left Anna unsupported in England. He writes that Anna "should have her proper share of the money you got from the sale of her father's estate. Anything else would be iniquitous" (61). Both the letter and Hester's indignant response to it position Anna as an unwanted burden who has nevertheless been stripped of her inheritance and family support. As a reader, we would expect Anna to feel outraged, to demand her share of her inheritance or to demand Hester pay her way to return to Dominica, but she does neither. These scenes show that Anna is ungrounded not only because she is an outsider in England, but also because she is without family, a partner, or children.
[201] See Anna Snaith.

has ties to generations of West Indians, and Hester seems to imply that Anna's mother was black, Anna also expresses regret at her cold whiteness, repeating that as a child, "I wanted to be black, I always wanted to be black" (31). For Hester, Anna is not white enough, but Anna herself seems to feel too white. To Hester's complaint that Anna grew up "never seeing a white face from one week's end to the next," Anna bursts out that she "hated being white" (72). As a white, half-Dominican woman raised in a position of privilege in a colonial outpost, Anna is caught between identifying with the colonizer and the colonized, a position that is amplified in England, where she lives with other exiles and immigrants who complain that they are treated like "a dirty foreigner" (139). In her social life, Anna seems strung between attachment and disconnection. Despite the steady stream of men and women that she lives and dines with, Anna claims persistent loneliness. After her failed love affair with Walter, Anna tries to write him a letter, in which she repeats and contradicts herself as insistently as the houses in the novel itself: "I love you I love you I love you but you're just a god-damned rotter everybody is everybody is everybody is" (104). Repetition provides no clarity for Anna; despite repeating herself, she is rife with contradictions, unsure whether she loves Walter or whether he's a "god-damned rotter." In her encounters with other—mostly nameless and faceless—men, Anna is a bundle of contradictions, at times withdrawn, disoriented, and cold, and at other times, aggressive, flirtatious, and behaving with an assurance she claims not to feel.[202]

In response to Anna's material life, the form of the novel is drafty, and engages in its own migration from section to section. Each chapter veers disorientingly into the next one, echoing what came before it. As a reader, you would be forgiven for getting lost in the text, wondering

[202] Walter, for instance, calls her "Shy, Anna" because of her reticence (79); later, Anna takes off her shoe and throws it at a picture in her bedroom while dancing to a gramophone (161).

which neighborhood and house you're in, when Anna herself wonders where she is.[203] Readers might think of the text itself as Anna thinks of London: "Everything was always exactly alike" (179). If, as I suggested before, Anna's rebirth at the novel's end is also a death, then repetition is familiarity devoid of stability. If all the cardinal directions, north, south, east, west, are "all exactly alike," then it is impossible to orient oneself. The familiarity, its perplexing sameness, is precisely what makes it disorienting. In contrast to *In Pursuit of the English*, where furniture, floors, and wallpaper are literally in motion, in *Voyage in the Dark*, it is Anna who is perpetually in motion, destabilizing her own sense of physical belonging and location by migrating from room to room in London. For Anna, more than for Lessing and Selvon's characters, London is defined by confinement. Perhaps because she is writing earlier in the century, Rhys represents England as a room that is perpetually getting smaller. In the midst of a depression, Anna compares living in Newcastle to Mudford's story, "The Iron Shroud," thinking about "the room I had there, and [the] story about the walls of a room getting smaller and smaller until they crush you to death. […] 'I believe this damned room's getting smaller and smaller,' I thought. And about the rows of houses outside, rim-crack, rotten-looking, and all exactly alike" (30). This boarding house room, figuratively getting smaller and smaller until it crushes her, reminds her also of the streets outside. Near the end of the novel, Anna laments that "all the houses seemed to be hotels" (128). England seems temporary to Anna, perhaps because she lives only in temporary housing, or perhaps because the hominess or security that she expects to find in the city I noticeably absent. In either case, this observation echoes Rhys's later novel, *Good Morning, Midnight*, in which Sasha Jensen also migrates between hotel rooms. Like Sasha, Anna experiences her rented rooms as if she is an out-of-town guest living there temporarily. Her

[203] For instance, Anna wonders of her latest landlady: "She was exactly like our landlady at Eastbourne. Was it Eastbourne?" (103).

relationship to these rooms speaks to the larger experience of belonging in England, a place where she is a perpetual boarder, never quite as home but never entirely exiled either, on the threshold between having a space to call her own and being entirely an outsider.

Sam Selvon's Migrant Forms

In Sam Selvon's novel, *The Lonely Londoners*, the crowded conditions of rented rooms map onto the space of novel, where the narrative voice moves fluidly between characters like sound between the walls. *The Lonely Londoners* is the first in Selvon's series of picaresque novels that follow the exploits of several West Indian immigrants searching for housing, work, and companionship in London. The novel operates like a fictional boarding house; it houses the stories of various different boarders under one roof. Its wandering narrative style lambasts the desire for wholeness that underpins colonial projects and navigates the contradictory desires for privacy and community inherent in immigrant domestic life. *The Lonely Londoners* begins through the perspective of Moses, who is the quasi-narrator of the text and like his namesake, an outsider who leads others to a kind of "promised land."[204] As Moses meets and houses other West Indians, the novel shifts to tell their stories. Throughout Selvon's oeuvre, characters seek home ownership as a key to financial and social stability in immigrant London.[205] While critics have categorized Selvon's novels as being about mobility or "movement" through the city, I contend that his novels are also about mobility within and through interior space.[206]

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[204] Like the biblical Moses, Selvon's Moses is also searching for the Promised Land, and is caught between belonging to two different groups.

[205] In *The Housing Lark* (1965) and *Moses Ascending* (1975), Moses "moves up in the world" by becoming a landlord for his own boarding house, where he rents rooms to a diverse group of women and immigrants. These novels argue that real estate is the key to financial and social stability, as well as upward mobility, for London's immigrants.

[206] See, for example, Lisa Kabesh, Rebecca Dyer, and Kenneth Ramchand.

Housing is a symbol of social power in Selvon's novels and real estate is used as a way characters measure their integration into England. In the opening scene of the novel, Moses takes the bus to Waterloo Station to pick up a friend of a friend arriving from Trinidad. When Moses arrives at the station, he meets "Henry Oliver Esquire, alias Sir Galahad" and offers Galahad a spot on his floor for the night, after which, Moses announces "I might shift from my room and go upstairs, and I will see if I could fix up with the landlord for you to take my room" (33). Although Moses initially expresses annoyance that he has to pick up a stranger at Waterloo ("he didn't know the man from Adam"), he quickly senses the opportunity for architectural advancement, surmising that he could move up in his building (and hence, in the social world) if he finds another renter for his basement room. Characters who are without a place to live, like Galahad or Cap, are intensely preoccupied with finding a place. Cap, Moses's first roommate in the hostel, grouses about how he has no place to live and therefore he "ain't have nothing" (56). The aptly-nicknamed character "Big City" talks about how he would like to "have money, and buy out a whole street of house, and give it to the boys and say: 'Here, look place to live'" (97). Moses recounts the story of a Jamaican who saves up to buy a house and "let out rooms to the boys, hitting them anything like three or four guineas for a double…Sometimes he put a bed and chair in two or three big room and tell the fellars they could live in there together, but each would have to pay a pound" (27-28). Moses himself longs to buy a house and lease the rooms and in later novels, *Moses Ascending* and *The Housing Lark*, he becomes a property owner.

Even as Moses moves up in the world of rented rooms, he remains caught between his desires to assimilate in England and his loyalty to act as a host to recent immigrants. For Selvon, this tension is a site of humor, rather than melancholy, as it is for Lessing and Rhys. The novel invites us to laugh at Moses's perspective on migration from the Caribbean. When Moses picks

up Galahad at the train station, Moses reflects that West Indians are now "invading the country by the hundreds" but considers that "the old Brit'n too diplomatic to clamp down on the boys or to do anything drastic like stop them from coming to the Mother Country" (24). By his account, Moses himself is like "old Brit'n" in feeling "too diplomatic" to tell Galahad to stay elsewhere. But Moses is like "Old Brit'n" in other ways, namely that his own room becomes a makeshift hostel for the newly-arrived. Moses is a reluctant host for the many Trinidadian immigrants that arrive looking for work and a place to live and he complains that he "hardly have time to settle in the old Brit'n before all sorts of fellars start coming straight to his room in the Water when they land up in London" (23).[207] Galahad even calls Moses "mister London" (39). His hosting is compared to London's own welfare system: "so like a welfare officer Moses scattering the boys around London" (25).

In his role as a host, Moses also incites the fear of contamination that threatens the London housing market and Englishness itself. Moses claims that some immigrants are "parasites" who "muddy the water for the boys" (41). The narrator tells us that "Moses watch the specimen [Galahad] again suspiciously" (33). The language of contagion used to describe recent immigrants is, ironically, infectious—Moses picks up on the language of the popular press in observing Galahad as a "specimen" and considering West Indian immigration as an "invasion." Kenneth Ramchand has argued that Selvon's language contains "unspoken fear of contamination," pointing to the scene where Moses "take out a white handkerchief and blow his nose. The handkerchief turn black" (23). The novel repeatedly punctures the idea that English national culture (or even West Indian national culture) might remain discrete. Contamination goes in two directions; Selvon's use of vernacular mixes Moses's over-the-top English prose

[207] In *Moses Ascending*, Moses waxes poetic about how Britain welcomed him, saying "I we the country that took me in…I was hungry and they gave me fish and chips; I was thirsty and they gave me a cuppa; I was penniless and they gave me dole; I was destitute and today I am Landlord of a mansions in West London" (138).

with West Indian regionalisms. Moses's nickname for Henry Oliver—Sir Galahad—invokes Arthurian legend even as Galahad himself represents the fears of the English public about immigration. Galahad experiences very little of the disorientation that is otherwise common for new immigrants in the novel—his response to London's weather suggests that he does not register the sensation of being elsewhere than home. When Galahad arrives at Waterloo without a coat, Moses incredulously reflects that "he never thought the day would come when a fellar would land up from the sunny tropics on a powerful winter evening wearing a tropical suit" (34). Galahad, in contrast, tells Moses, "This is the way the weather does be in the winter? It not so bad, man. In fact I feeling a little warm" (33). Galahad seems to adjust so easily, it is almost as if he hasn't left Trinidad. His assimilation belies the experience of his fellow immigrants, who complain about the cold when they arrive. When confronted with Moses's rented basement room, Galahad complains that it is too small (36). Galahad's arrival replicates, in comedic form, the fiction that immigrants might be welcomed to London with open arms. Galahad irreverently embodies the fears of colonial sexuality, impregnating a white British girl whose mixed-race baby unsettled the boundaries of citizenship laws based on race and territory.

The slippery narrative voice of *The Lonely Londoners* is a counterpart to the slippages in the text's representation of national belonging. If the characters experience disorientation through their unsettled rooms, then the readers experience disorientation through the novel's unsettled form. I read Selvon's experimentation in terms of language, narrative perspective, and plot development as a formal response to the upheaval in national space that the characters experience through their rooms. Much of the critical debate around Selvon has focused on his use of dialect.[208] However important this strain of interpretation is, it has clouded the analysis of Selvon's form outside of his use of dialect to understand the novel's approach to home,

[208] See James Procter, Susheila Nasta, Gordon Rohlehr, Michel Fabre.

belonging, housing, and immigration. The narrative voice in *The Lonely Londoners* is elusive, at times joining with Moses's reflections and at times working as a separate, third-person voice. In his introduction to the novel, Kenneth Ramchand has written that the narrative voice often seems "shared between Moses who is present (we see and hear what he does), and the narrator who comments or elaborates on the scene out of a larger knowledge, and more developed consciousness" (17). At times, the narrative voice seems to be what Ramchand calls a "solid presence" but at other times, the voice merges with other characters, including Galahad, Cap, and Bart. I want to build on Ramchand's argument by suggesting that the narrative voice is purposefully elusive, primarily speaking through the spaces that the characters occupy. In a cramped room, the voice merges more with Moses's;[209] in a communal space, it moves fluidly from character to character;[210] in any expansive or roomy setting (like the train station), it has distance from the characters' voices.[211] Throughout the novel, the characters' lived spaces exert an influence on the narrative voice, which increasingly seems to respond to the conditions of rented rooms.

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[209] See, for example, Galahad's first morning in Moses's apartment, where the narrator's commentary and Moses's commentary on Galahad are closely related. The narrator reflects, "It have a kind of fellar who does never like people to think that they unaccustomed to anything" and in free-indirect discourse, Moses reflects that Galahad "give Moses the feeling that everything all right, that he could take care of himself" (38).

[210] See p. 138, for instance.

[211] For instance, on the bus, the narrative voice first has distance from Moses and then we can perceive a shift from third-person to free indirect discourse: "And is the same soft heart that have him now on the bus going to Waterloo to meet a fellar name Henry Oliver. He doesn't know how he always getting in position like this, helping people out. He sigh; the damn bus crawling in the fog, and the evening so melancholy that he wish he was back in bed" (25). The first sentence describes Moses from an outside perspective (his soft heart drives him to do favors for friends), which gradually shifts to free indirect discourse ("He sigh") and Moses desires ("he wish he was back in bed"). At other times, the narrative voice is almost unconsciously shared. When Moses arrives to pick up Galahad in the train station, he overhears a reporter interviewing recent immigrants say "maliciously" to a family, "I hope you don't find our weather too cold for you" (32). When Galahad arrives, his complaint that London is too warm seems to respond to the reporter's earlier query, obliquely subverting and mocking the reporter's vitriol. Even if Galahad and the reporter do not speak, their shared space in the train station waiting room implies a communal conversation. Their proximity suggests that Galahad is responding to the reporter even if they do not communicate directly.

> The houses around here old and grey and weatherbeaten, the walls cracking like the last days of Pompeii, it ain't have no hot water, and in the whole street that Tolroy and them living in, none of the houses have bath. You had was to buy one of them big galvanise basin and boil the water and full it up, or else go to the public bath. Some of the houses still had gas light, which is to tell you how old they was. *All the houses in a row in the street, on both sides, they build like one long house with walls separating them in parts, so your house jam-up between two neighbours: is so most of the houses is in London* (my italics, 73).

This section describes the common conditions of housing: the houses may be falling apart, they are in a tight row in the street and they are built "like one long house with walls separating them in parts" (73). These boarding houses were constructed in the wake of increased immigration to London, and were often set up as temporary spaces, where landlords would add walls to divide apartments or even single rooms into multiple rooms they could rent separately. These rooms are temporary, and the effect is to produce temporary inhabitants. Moses, Bart, Cap, and the other characters move dozens of times in the novel, rarely staying in one apartment for more than several paragraphs at a time. Moses's migrancy, for instance, is in large part the result of impermanent living structures.[212] While describing the architectural relationship between different houses in London, this passage also describes the way the narrative voice moves through these spaces. The houses are "one long house," "jam-up between two neighbors" and with only "walls separating them in parts." The houses have shared walls that allow noise to travel easily between the walls. The narration echoes this architectural set-up; the stories are

[212] In this sense, the rooms have a similar effect on Moses and his friends as the Majestic has on the Major, where the house's transience inspires transience in its inhabitants: the rooms are temporary so they become temporary dwellers in them.

"jam-up" from one to the next, as the narrator moves quickly from Cap to Bart to Tolroy to Tolroy's aunt, Tanty.

The form of the novel is thus much like the spaces the characters inhabit: the stories are shared and shift perspectives in response to proximity. The stories also keep returning to the same lived scenes—in Moses's basement room—as if the characters are unable to break outside of their spatial habits. Margaret Byron and Stephanie Condon speak to the importance of "first lodgings" for shaping the experience of recent immigrants.[213] In *The Lonely Londoners*, Moses's "first lodgings" are a communal hostel, a place where "he wouldn't have to spend much money, where he could get plenty of food, and where he could meet the boys and coast a old talk to pass the time away—for this city powerfully lonely when you on your own" (47). The hostel is a communal living space architecturally—a "big dining room" in which everyone eats together, a shared lounge, and several men in the same room—which translates into a sense of community for Moses, who finds that the hostel compensates for London being "powerfully lonely" (47). Yet the hostel is decidedly an impermanent space; Moses reflects that "Most of the boys graduate from there before they branch off on their own and begin to live in London" (47). The space of the hostel is a catalyst for a shift in the narration, from Moses's story to the stories of other immigrants. Shared material spaces translate into shared narrative spaces. The hostel, then, works as a metaphor for the space of the novel itself where the narrative's arc follows the arc of Moses's housing. As Moses is sitting in the common room, the narrative roves to Cap for the first time: "In other room had a pingpong table, and they used to play knout, and some sharp games used to play there. In another room had a billiards table…There was a fellar name

[213] See Byron and Condon, chapter 4. Also see Selvon's later novel, *Moses Migrating*, in which Moses returns to Trinidad and resides in a five-star hotel, a representative change of housing from his dilapidated rental home in London.

Captain. Captain was Nigerian…" (48). The hostel also works as a narrative foundation, a base to which the novel returns after telling the stories of the characters Moses meets there.

When the "boys" share a communal space, their sense of London itself shifts. When we read about Sunday morning, when they get together in Moses's rooms—" like if they going to church, the boys liming in Moses room, coming together for a oldtalk"—both the attitude toward London and the approach of the narrative voices change. Gail Low has argued that "gatherings in rooms offer some reprieve from the hostile world outside. More importantly, they literally enable an exchange of voices and stories" (171-72). The gatherings among Moses and his friends allow them to share stories, but they figuratively enable shared narration in the form of the novel itself. Moses's sense of "great compassion" for his compatriots bleeds into the narrator's reflections on London itself, which becomes a more sympathetic city (139). He reflects that London is "the great city of London, centre of the world…you get so much to like it you wouldn't leave it for anywhere else" (137). This represents a change from earlier moments in the novel, when London is "grim" or its monuments are not "sharp" but "like nothing" (52, 85). In this communal space, the narrative voice becomes more communal, as well. In one sentence, it shifts through the characters as they speaking:

> […] Harris looking at his watch anxiously and saying that he has an important engagement, but all the same never getting up to go, and Bart saying that he sure one of the boys must have seen his girl Beatrice, but you-all too nasty, you wouldn't tell me where, ease me up, man, I must find that girl again, and Cap smiling his innocent smile what trap so many people, and Galahad cocky and pushing his mouth in everything and Big City fiddling with the radio […](139).

In this passage, the narrative focus shifts from person to person in a single sentence, as it does almost nowhere else in the novel. The majority of *The Lonely Londoners* is a series of vignettes, separated by page breaks, which focus on one or two characters to the exclusions of the others. Only in this section and two other brief portions of the text does the narrative voice move fluidly from describing one character to another. In this passage, the lack of punctuation draws the men together in a single sentence, as they are drawn together in a room. It also does not merely record them speaking, but shifts from dialogue ("Bart saying that he was sure") to action ("Big City fiddling with the radio") to description ("Cap smiling his innocent smile"). This final scene of Moses and his friends together on Sunday afternoon offers a transition from the more discrete narratives in the earlier part of the novel and the central, unpunctuated, experimental section at the middle of the novel.

In the experimental section of the novel, the separate stories of the immigrants are syntactically brought together as the characters are spatially brought together. The section is a single sentence that spans eight pages, and it rewrites and recounts some of the earlier stories in the novel. Two representative examples from this section show its focus on retelling:

> Moses move through all the nationalities in the world and then he start the circle again everybody know how after the war them rich English family sending to the continent to get domestic and over there all them girls think like the newspapers say about the Jamaicans that the streets of London paved with gold so they coming by the boatload (102-103).
>
> Moses sit down on the bed and the bed fall down when Cap come back he say Cap you are a hell of a man you break my bed Cap say sorry Moses say this is the third time you break my bed Cap say it was warm and nice in the bed Moses say what I

> will tell the landlord this thing happening so often and he had was to put a box and prop up the bed to sleep (106).

Both these passages emphasize repetition—Moses "start the circle again" of thinking through the world's nationalities; his idea about the roads being paved with gold produces repeated "boatloads" of immigrants; it is the "third time" Moses has broken Cap's bed; the bed has broken "so often" that Cap must prop it up with a book—in a section which offers no logical syntactical stopping point. This section evokes Sasha Jensen's lament in *Good Morning, Midnight* that "this damned room [is]…all the rooms I've ever slept in…rooms, streets, streets, rooms" (109). The sense of community and shared experience between the characters of the novel is counterbalanced by the sense of repetition—breaking the same bed, moving between the same rented rooms, always chasing after money that disappears.

Lived spaces are impermanent for each character; no room or house is ever considered a permanent home and most of Selvon's men are jockeying to move up in their buildings and in London.[214] Their impermanence rooms signal their impermanent position within Britain. Bart, for instance, "moving from place to place week after week, though he paying rent, he too fraid to get in trouble in this country, and he not as brazen as Cap" (64). Even for the men who are paying rent, both housing and citizenship conditions are impermanent and many of the characters worry

[214] Even with the larger city, domestic architecture reflects London's social hierarchy. Moses remarks that in his neighborhood, "It have a kind of communal feeling with the Working Class and the spades, because when you poor things does level out, it don't have much up and down" (75). The rich, on the other hand, enjoy a kind of spatial isolation amplified by their housing on higher stories. The "old fellars," poor war widows and immigrants, walk down the streets: "looking up at the high windows, where the high and mighty living, and now and then a window would open and somebody would throw down threepence or a tanner, and the old fellar have to watch it good else it roll in the road and get lost. Up in that fully furnished flat where the window open (rent bout ten or fifteen guineas, Lord) it must be have some woman that sleep late after a night at the Savoy or Dorchester, and she was laying under the warm quilt on the Simmons mattress, and she hear the test singing…it [the singing] never go further than to cause the window to open and the tanner to fall down. In fact when the woman throw the tanner from the window she didn't even look down" (75).The wealthy, designated by their "fully furnished flats" and "warm quilt" and "Simmons mattress," are insulated from the suffering of those on the street. The woman in the window remains remote from the man in the street. Moses and his friends live in the bottom floor—both literally and figuratively—and their rooms work as a reminder of their struggle to make a home in England.

aloud about being jailed or deported. As the characters migrate from room to room, the narrator's reflections on the conditions of social life shift, as well. Cap moves "from boarding house to hotel, from room to room" evading paying rent (51). Cap's experience in London shifts depending on his housing situation. When he tricks a hotel porter into giving him one of the best ground floor rooms in the hotel by claiming he is a student, Cap finds that the "clerk start calling him 'mister' and hustle to get him a room" (50). But when Cap is ejected from the hotel and must wander on the streets looking for work, the tone of the narrative shifts from jocose to bleak. On a job at the railway, Cap is taken behind the railway station, and thinks that the landscape is "real grim. The people who living in London don't really know how behind them railway station does be so desolate and discouraging. It like another world" (52). When Cap has "no place to stay himself," London feels like "another world" compared to the city when he has a well-appointed room (51, 52). His rooms affect his larger sense of being "at home" in the city, and in England. At the same time, this passage draws attention to how London is "another world" for many marginalized people.

Even within the working class and immigrant communities, architecture keeps people isolated. The rented rooms and the characters that move frequently between them feel disconnected from one another. The narrator remarks, "It have people living in London who don't know what happening in the room next to them, far more the street, or how other people living. London is a place like that. It divide up in little worlds, and you stay in the world you belong to and you don't know anything about what happening in the other ones except what you read in the papers" (74). London is a city divided, not only the upper stories from the streets, but also the rented basements from one another. The city is a series of "little worlds," where the inhabitant of one apartment might not know anything what "the room next" to him. If Moses

complains that "People in this world don't know how other people does affect their lives," then the form of the story offers an implicit rebuttal to this argument (76). *The Lonely Londoners* tells another story, of the figurative interconnections between the immigrant lives, especially those provoked or catalyzed by their shared rooms and apartments. Even when these connections are subtle or implicit, they repudiate the sense of absolute isolation. The "little worlds" start to bleed into one another. For example, the narrator points out that "Before Jamaicans start to invade Brit'n, it was a hell of a thing to pick up a piece of saltfish anywhere, or to get thing like pepper sauce or dasheen or even garlic" (76). But after the Jamaicans move into London in larger numbers, the city itself changes: "But now, papa! Shop all about start to take in stocks of foodstuffs what West Indians like" (77). Immigration alters the cityscape in tangible and intangible ways. London is both bigger and smaller, more interconnected than it was before.

Although *The Lonely Londoners* is largely comic, it also conceals bleaker moments. Toward the end of the novel, Moses stands on the banks of the Thames, and he thinks behind the lightness and joy of people walking through the city, "he could see a great aimlessness, a great restless, swaying movement that leaving you standing in the same spot. As if a forlorn shadow of doom fall on all the spades in the country. As if he could see the black faces bobbing up and down in the millions of white…bewildered, hopeless" (141-42). Although Moses and his friends are indeed always moving ("aimlessness, a great restlessness, swaying movement"), they end up "in the same spot," in a rented basement room, not so different than the one that came before it. Like Moses, the novel sees these moments of disorientation, the feelings of "aimlessness" or "restlessness" disguised within the comedy, such as when Galahad is forced to eat pigeons out of starvation, or Tanty feels seasick taking a bus for the first time. Underneath the façade of

comedy, the novel reveals a fragility in its characters, what Moses sees as "a kind of misery and pathos" in his fellow immigrants bobbing through the crowd in London (142).

Doris Lessing's Wandering Houses

Doris Lessing's *In Pursuit of the English* opens with the author's meditation on the book's impossible goal to understand Englishness. She reflects, "I have been thinking for some time of writing a piece called: In Pursuit of the Working-Class. My life has been spent in pursuit…I have chased, off and on, and with much greater deviousness of approach, the working-class and the English" (6). But, she concludes, her pursuit is ultimately impossible because Englishness is "a grail, a quintessence, and by definition, unattainable" (6). If Englishness is elusive to Lessing, so is the genre and purpose of her novel about Englishness. She variously describes the book as a documentary, an autobiography, a novel, a pursuit of Englishness, a pursuit of the working class, and a reflection on the "business of being an exile" (2). Lessing's critics have accused her of stylistic sloppiness, with one summarizing the critical consensus as: "we don't read Lessing for the 'style', but if at all, for the 'content'" (Hanson 39). However, I see Lessing's convoluted approach to the subject of her own text not as carelessness, but as a deliberate response to the disorienting spatial conditions of her initial immigration to London. That is, the text's apparent disjunctions or digressions are in fact, a response to Lessing's historical context at home and her pursuit of a national identity that Lessing finds "unattainable." In the novel, it is not only immigrants like Lessing who feel like exiles; even the English feel like outsiders in London. I argue that Lessing "pursues" Englishness through the boarding houses and rented rooms she lives in, and that her liminal textual style conscientiously

grapples with these in-between spaces. Her form follows from her material world, replicating the transitional space of the boarding house in textual form.

Lessing subtitled *In Pursuit of the English* a "documentary," and the text straddles the border between fact and fiction.[215] One early reviewer remarks that the book is "disarmingly presented in the form of a journal" (Mudrick 292). The semi-autobiographical novel describes the narrator (a semi-fictional version of Lessing) as she immigrates to London from Cape Town in 1949, where she finds the city "full of foreigners" and real "Englishness" elusive. Most of the text takes place at a boarding house run by a woman named Flo. Flo's boarding house is both a business and a home—she negotiates rent in the morning and cooks enormous Italian meals for her tenants in the evening. In the house, Lessing forms a community with Flo and her family and some of the other tenants, whose lives she overhears through the thin walls of Flo's house. In many aspects, the text is autobiographical. It charts a timeline that is similar to Lessing's official autobiographies, following the narrator's departure from South Africa, her arrival in London, and her search for housing, work, and friends in London. The long opening section, which works as a preface to the narrative that follows, acts as an introduction to a memoir. And the subtitle, "Documentary," lends veracity to these autobiographical aspects, even if it does not outright claim factual status. In other aspects however, the text veers toward fiction, as Lessing herself later admitted in the second volume of her autobiographies:

> What I say in it [*In Pursuit of the English*] is true enough. A couple of characters were changed for libel reasons and would have to be now. But there is no doubt that while 'true', the book is not as true as what I would write now. It is a question

[215] Claire Sprague has also persuasively shown that the context of Lessing's readers strongly influences the reception of her work.

> of tone, and that is no simple matter. That little book is more like a novel; it has the shape and the pace of one. It is too well shaped for life (4).

The text is, as Lessing mentions, too "well shaped" to be truly autobiographical, but it is not only the form of the text that suggests its fictionality. One of stranger formal aspects of the text is that the narrator, presumably Lessing, is never identified by name, nor is her son.[216] The text occasionally mentions and incorporates Lessing's journals and letters, as when she tries to describe her first flat in Bayswater, and resorts to quoting herself, with the preface: "This is how it struck me at the time…" (28). Other aspects of the text seem deliberately fabricated or embellished, including dialogue and prices that would require incredible recall to be entirely factual. These disjunctive formal aspects position the work between fact and fiction, making *In Pursuit of the English* the kind of generically disorienting text that other critics have called "border crossing" or "liminal."[217] I argue that the text's liminal form is a response to Lessing's experience as an "exile" in London's boarding houses.

In comparison to Rhys and Selvon, Lessing is more direct about her political engagement with questions of Englishness, belonging, and immigration. If for Rhys, housing was implicitly related to her sense of belonging in England, for Lessing, housing explicitly shapes her perception of Englishness. The narrator (hereafter referred to as Lessing for simplicity) writes her sense of displacement primarily through the rooms of the story. In the boarding house she stays in before she departs to England, the house seems to be moving both metaphorically and physically: "It was very old, a ramshackle *wandering house* of wood…It had two storeys, the

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[216] Throughout this chapter, I will refer to the unnamed narrator as "Lessing." Although it is clear that Lessing and the narrator share many qualities, the text does not outright claim that the central character is autobiographical. For the sake of clarity, however, it seems easiest to call this unnamed narrator Lessing.

[217] See Alice Ridout and Susan Watkins's *Doris Lessing: Border Crossing*, or Carolyn Heilbrun's *Women's Lives: The View from the Threshold*. Though Ridout and Watkins examine many of the works in Lessing's substantial oeuvre, they reference *In Pursuit of the English* only cursorily.

upper linked to the lower only by an outside wooden staircase. The place was filthy, unpainted, decaying; a fire-trap and a death-trap—in short, picturesque to a degree. A heavy step upstairs made the whole structure *tremble* to its foundations" (13, my italics). Here, the house seems to be mobile in two ways: it is a "wandering house," both because it "trembles" and shakes physically, but also because it is the site of departure for many immigrants. Its occupants are wanderers. When Lessing arrives in London, she struggles to find her way amongst the many other "wandering houses" that offer no more stability than the rented room she finds in South Africa.

In the first part of the novel, Lessing emphasizes the labyrinthine space of the boarding houses as a way of explaining both her subjective psychological condition and her experience of England at large. In her first search for a room, she follows a landlady past a locked "door that barred our way into a more bleak corridor. The stairs were now very narrow and twisted sharply after each short flight…I imagined vistas of passageways, opening on to yet more rooms, more lives" (35). The boarding house, a bleak, locked, "narrow and twisted" space, houses what Lessing imagines to be hundreds of people. Its labyrinthine aspect shapes Lessing's experience of London at large, where the "vistas of passageways" in each boarding house echo the "version of London" that each character seems to inhabit (35). This association between rooms and lives resonates with Woolf's *The Waves* earlier in the century, where Bernard also experiences different versions of himself through the rooms that he occupies: "many rooms, many Bernards." If Bernard's many rooms were a metaphor for his search for subjectivity, then for Lessing, the many rooms are about her search for Englishness. And yet, the maziness of these boarding houses also translates to maziness in Lessing's subjective experience: "My head was, as usual in those early days in London, in a maze. To my right and left stretched that street which seemed

exactly like all the main streets in London, the same names recurring at regular intervals, the same patterns of brick and plaster. It seemed to me impossible that the people walking past the decent little shops that were so alike…could ever know one part of London from another" (41). London's repetitive geography disorients Lessing because it is unknowable; she complains that it was difficult to "know one part of London from another."[218]

Lessing finds many unsettled spaces in London, where the metaphorical "wandering houses" can literally drift, as well. When Doreen Massey argues that "there is no stable point" (138) in twentieth century geography, she draws on the evidence of shifting landmasses and changing ocean tides. The geology behind this philosophy suggests large-scale instability that is also frequently borne out on the smaller scales of changing national boundaries, changing territories, and renovated cityscapes. Lessing prefigures Massey's argument by representing this large-scale instability through the smaller-scale instability of boarding house rooms. In Flo's boarding house, the ground-floor houses an elderly couple whom Flo her husband, Dan, spend many months trying to evict. Lessing relates that the couple refused to vacate the premises during the war, even when the house was bombed. When Flo and her husband bought the place,

[218] This passage also has echoes with *Voyage in the Dark*, in which Anna Morgan finds London's "sameness" to be disorienting, causing her to feel that her head is "a maze" precisely because the city is one. Yet rather than Anna's isolation, Lessing emphasizes the difficulty of knowing and understanding London—and through it, Englishness—because of its repetition. The subjective geographies of Londoners contribute to Lessing's sense of disorientation in the city. When Lessing arrives in London, she struggles to establish a personal sense of geography, and finds that Londoners, like the many immigrants in the city, operate based on subjective geographies: "I was directed back and forth by passers-by, each one saying helpfully, 'It's just around the corner,' and looking impatient when I said: 'Which corner?' This business of the next corner is confusing to aliens, who will interpret it as the next intersection of the street. But to the Londoner, with his highly subjective attitude to geography, the 'corner' will mean, perhaps, a famous pub, or an old street whose importance dwarfs all the intervening streets out of existence" (34). In the novel, geography is a subjective experience; the city is without clear order. Even Londoners do not always know one part of London from another. Rose, another boarder at the house she lives in throughout most of the text, and Flo, the landlord there, each inhabit their own London: "Rose's London was the half-mile of streets where she had been born and brought up, populated by people she trusted; the house where she now lived" (94). In contrast, "Flo's London did not even include the West End, since she had left the restaurant in Holborn. It was the basement she lived in; the shops she was registered at; and the cinema five minutes' walk away" (94). Each version of London is an enclosed space, a "half-mile" or even less, the "basement she lived in" and the theatre a few blocks away. Each person has her own version of city, and both Rose and Flo experience London as exiles, of a sort.

the elderly couple remained, using a vague "Rent Act" to maintain their inexpensive lodgings. Much of the latter part of the novel is dedicated to a domestic war in which Flo and Dan take the elderly couple to court. In these scenes, the elderly woman replicates wartime anxiety about invasion, screaming in court that "Justice, British justice, it's all Jews and foreigners" (185). When they finally persuade the courts to evict the couple from their home, Flo and Dan find their decaying rooms literally in motion:

> The window into the street was open, and all the surfaces were in movement. Damp paper hung in strips and shreds from above, stirring and writhing. All around the walls it looked as if soiled stuffing burst from cushions, and wriggled and coiled as it forced its way out through a dingy, yellowing-grey substance (191).

The rooms are in motion—the surfaces "in movement," "stirring and writhing." The walls "wriggled and coiled" with fabric and stuffing. The house is in disrepair, but it is also in flux, with renters moving in and out and parts of the house decaying or collapsing. The room disturbs its occupants' desires to make a stable home there. The room's literal movement echoes other movement in the text: the displacement of the elderly couple, the way each character tries to move up in the world, Lessing's own migrations through London, the instability of the rental market, and Lessing's search to understand Englishness. These migrations are, in part, a response to the way war reoriented London's geography, wiping out some blocks and leaving others intact, forcing many people to move through the city. After the elderly couple leaves and the "War Damage people" arrive to restore their bedrooms, Lessing remarks that "the house was in chaos…the roof of the attic had collapsed under a weight of stagnant water, bringing down part of the walls" (193). In Lessing's room, the floors are "at varying levels" and the furniture is

"warped" (198). After the war, London must reorient itself to a new geography as a result of bombings and immigration. The elderly couple's objection that British justice is "all Jews and foreigners" is representative of the anxieties of an entire generation—older, white, heterosexual, married—that is seeing their London changing before their eyes. Homes and national affiliations that once seemed stable are now very clearly unsettled as the characters reorient themselves to a new version of London. The room is the material equivalent of Lessing's search for Englishness—the old couple seeks a home to remain in but they find instead that their very walls are stirring and writhing; Lessing seeks to understand Englishness but finds only "a grail, a quintessence […] unattainable" (6). The in-flux rooms of Flo's house refuse the couple the stability they seek—both at the boarding house and in England at large, which seems to be changing as rapidly as the walls of their bedroom.

Each character in the text is out of place for different reasons, and many of them self-identify as exiles. The elderly couple from Flo's house feels clearly out of place in a city that is changing rapidly around them. Flo, the landlord, has an Italian grandmother, leading Rose to call her a "foreigner," and to explain, "She was born here. But her grandmother was Italian, see?" (56). Dan, her husband, is also "not really" English because, as Rose puts it, "he's from Newcastle. They're different from us" (56). But even Rose's "us," apparently separate from Flo's "foreignness" is unclear. When Lessing presses Rose on whom she thinks of as "us," Rose confesses that even she does not consider herself English, claiming "I'm from London, as I told you. That's what I mean when I say I'm not English. Not really. When I talk of English, what I mean is, my granddad and my grandma. That's English. The country" (106). This collective sense of exile and marginalization suggests that "Englishness" changed so rapidly that it becomes unstable. The rooms that each character occupies contributes to the unsettling of

"home" on the architectural and national level. When Lessing first comes to live at Flo's house, she is put in the attic, a room that is isolated from the "home" but also filled with the sounds of the rest of the house. The attic is on the top level of the house, with the floor below is under filled with "rubble and mess from the bombing," and a window that opens up onto "a brick channel" of grim rooftops (77, 54). The presumed safety of the interior room, then, is in fact sandwiched by war-torn rooms and the crowded alleys outside. In a further juxtaposition, Lessing complains that at the top of the house, she feels "cut off from the rest of the house" even though in the attic she can hear "an orchestra of sound" from the floors below.

Lessing's primary narrative mode is one of surveillance, a perspective that ironically echoes her neighbors. Like the other novels this chapter reads, privacy is both desired and impossible in Flo's boarding house, where war damage and crowding makes private space hard to find. When Lessing first encounters the house, she finds the place "divided into two by curtains—or rather, curtains looped back high against the walls indicated a division" (48). This fragile division suggests border crossing between two ostensibly separate spaces for women and men. Unlike Woolf's childhood drawing room, with the folding doors that ensured discrete realms for men and women, Flo's house is chaotic, "crammed with people, puppies, children, kittens" (48). The lack of privacy extends throughout the house, through London, and through Lessing's form, which interweaves her roommates' stories with her own almost seamlessly. Inside the house, Flo bursts into Lessing's rooms without notice, and the thin walls easily transfer conversations and information between floors, much like they do in *The Lonely Londoners*. The form of *In Pursuit of the English* takes on the qualities of these rented rooms, as it shifts uncertainly from one boarding house occupant to the next. Overhearing her neighbors'

conversations gives Lessing access to their stories, which she tells alongside her own.[219] Lessing overhears her landlord, Flo, whose story she tells almost as if she is a third-person narrator: "Flo's life was spent in the basement. She and Aurora were confined there, with the doors and windows shut, the fire burning winter and summer…she was lonely; something hard to accept when one looked at these houses form outside, knowing them to be crammed with people" (122). Flo and Dan are both consumed with housing, though they live in a dilapidated basement. Flo manages renting rooms in their boarding house, and Dan works in construction, manipulating both people and their houses by convincing them to install different baths or wash-basins (131). Though the story is narrated in first person, the reader gets wider access to the motivations and personality of Flo, Dan, and Rose than she ever does of Lessing.

In many respects, Lessing's fellow boarders experience the effects of war and immigration through their private spaces. From wandering houses to wriggling walls, Lessing draws on the unreal aspects of London's private space to define her "pursuit" of Englishness in her quasi-memoir. In one scene, Lessing and Rose observe a bomb-torn block where buildings are interspersed with rubble: there was "a space where modern luxury flats confronted green grass and trees; then a couple of acres of rubble. 'Bombs,' said Rose dispassionately. 'We had them around here something awful.' It was as if the houses had shaken themselves to the ground. Thin shells of wall stood brokenly among debris" (47).[220] As Rose observes, many of the houses that remain after the bombings stay upright just out of habit: "Hundreds of these houses, you'd

[219] For instance, Lessing describes hearing her upstairs neighbors, the Skeffingtons, remarking, "I knew all the tones of [Mrs. Skeffington's] voice before I ever saw her" (80). Hearing the conversations upstairs leads the text into a long aside about the Skeffingtons' marriage, their child, and their schedule. The episode concludes with a scene in which Mrs. Skeffington throws herself down the stairs in an attempt to terminate an unwanted pregnancy.

[220] In another scene, Lessing observes her own disorientation because of bombed blocks: "These bombed areas are confusing" (59). Though there is much talk of "War Damage people" repairing these areas of London, there is very little renovation until the end of the novel. Instead, the bombed areas that litter the city are a spatial reminder of how the city was turned upside down during the war, disorienting both Lessing and long-term London residents through their effects on the city's houses.

be surprised—you'd think they'd fall down if someone gave a shout in the street. But they keep on standing out of sheer force of habit, as far as I can see" (213). Although Rose views the wartime geography impassively when it seems to be external on the street, she is actively disturbed when wartime damages affect her interior spaces, in the form of the price of her rooms or the other renters in Flo's house. Amidst Rose's "dispassionate" commentary on the bombs, Lessing observes something even stranger: in the debris, Lessing sees a man with a typewriter: "I saw a man in his shirt-sleeves, which were held neatly above the elbow by expanding bands, sitting on a tidy pile of rubble, the type-writer on a broken girder, clean white paper fluttering from the rim of the machine" (47). Whether he is real or a metaphor is unclear but the image of man with a typewriter, sitting atop a pile of rubble while his papers flutter in the wind is an apt metaphor for the space of the text itself and the juxtaposition between stability (the "tidy pile") and flux (the "fluttering paper"). If the man with a typewriter is a real, he is out of place in the surrounding landscape and yet provokes no comment from Rose or Lessing. If he is a metaphor, then he is a space of representation amidst the rubble of war, attempting to capture the world around him while still allowing movement—the "paper fluttering"—in his work. The movement of text and of home are replicated through the form of Lessing's novel, which is neither fiction nor fact and ends on the suitably inconclusive note—Rose saying, "A likely story"—which applies as much to the text itself as it does to their conversation.

Conclusion

Although Selvon, Lessing, and Rhys share a fascination with temporary homes, with feeling like an outsider in England, and with experimental or disorienting formal strategies, their characters take different approaches to making a home in England. Each character identifies

differently with Englishness because of his or her racial and national orientation, though they share the experience of immigrating to London from a British colony. Anna Morgan is the child of a white man and West Indian woman who "returns" to her father's homeland, a place she has never known. Caught between identifying as a colonial settler and a colonial subject, between being English and West Indian, between childhood and adulthood, and between being an orphan and yet not entirely abandoned, Anna is unfamiliar to herself as she searches for a place to call home. For Rhys, the repetition of repetition itself is a defamiliarizing strategy that echoes her relentless search for rooms, a search that is also a search for self. In each room, Anna faces a figurative (and sometimes also literal) mirror, where the resulting image—both of herself and of her space—is recognizable but unfamiliar.[221] Selvon's Moses is, unlike Anna, decidedly a colonial subject who immigrates to England. Yet his sense of identity and belonging in England is also troubled by his legal status in England, where he is both a subject and an outsider. For Selvon, the roaming narrative perspective is a strategy that reflects the colonial subject's sense of displacement in England but also his sense of community. Rooms and lives "jam-up" against each other afford little privacy in the novel's interior world and the character's interior spaces. Lessing, a white colonial subject, occupies a different orientation toward Englishness than either Rhys or Selvon. Yet despite her racial identification as English, her understanding of Englishness is no clearer than Anna's or Moses's.[222] For Lessing, the strategy of blurring the line between fiction and autobiography speaks to her sense of Englishness as a fiction. The "pursuit" of Englishness is the pursuit of a narrative about national belonging that is changing underfoot. Lessing's protagonist experiences this philosophically as she struggles to find both fictional and real England, but she also experiences this through her rented rooms, which let her form a

[221] See also footnote 196.
[222] See Baucom's concept of the "racial narrative" of Englishness.

community with her neighbors but destabilize her when people move in and out or her landlords begin construction on the house.

In my readings of all three authors, I want to emphasize two major currents that help explain the stakes of rooms as a way to understand home and homelessness in England. First, all three characters experience Englishness through the space of their boarding house rooms. That is, their ideas of what England is, of their own (post)colonial status, of their complicated relationship to British subjecthood, is experienced foremost through their private spaces. All three characters struggle to make or find a "home" in England. They experience this struggle largely through their rooms, and we see the influence of these spaces on their conception of national belonging in various ways. For Anna Morgan, Englishness is about "sameness," a quality that she uses to describe both London and the transience of her rented rooms. For Moses, Englishness is shaped by his struggles to move up architecturally and socially, one day owning his own boarding house. For Lessing, Englishness is as diverse and dispersed as the motley crew of renters in Flo's boarding house. The unusual formal choices of each novel—Rhys's repetition, Selvon's wandering narrative eye, and Lessing's conflicted use of autobiography—tries to make sense of the contradictions intrinsic to the rooms in each text and to the relationship between these rooms and the characters' overall understanding of Englishness as a shifting and variable entity. All three novels use disorienting narrative approaches—from Selvon's unique creolized English to Lessing's fictional borderlands—to represent rooms, and through rooms, the struggle to make "home" in England.

If the room is the structure through which the characters experience and interpret Englishness, then these rooms are unsettled by imperial strategies, immigration, and the aftermath of World War II. "Home" is not a stable location, but a material and ideological space

that is repeatedly reconfigured. In this capacity, boarding house rooms chronicle external change, but are agents of change, as well. In *The Lonely Londoners*, the influx of immigrants transforms Notting Hill; in *In Pursuit of the English*, the rise of boarding houses creates a new economy of landlords; in *Voyage in the Dark*, Anna's rooms are variously sites of prostitution, abortion, immigration, and a range of financial independence and dependence as a young, unattached woman. In each of these novels, the room unsettles their attitudes toward belonging, toward making a "home" in England. As the characters struggle to find a place for themselves in the city, their relationship to home is uncertain, and the unsettled rooms reflect the reality of continuous change in the city. These unsettled rooms speak to the disturbances in English space, not only on a literal level as streets and blocks are razed or reconstructed, but also on a figurative level as British colonial subjects and expatriates move or return to England.

For many British colonial subjects, citizenship is shaped and destabilized by imperialism, by immigration, and by the migrating narratives of Englishness. As Moses tells Galahad in *The Lonely Londoners*, "In fact, we is British subjects […] we have more right than any people from the damn continent to live and work in this country, and enjoy what this country have, because is we who bleed to make this country prosperous" (40). At this historical juncture, territorial nationalism no longer delineates citizenship and subjectivity as it once did. Ian Baucom has argued that imperialism creates a "racial narrative" of Englishness that displaces the "localist narrative" of Englishness (6). From Moses's perspective, he may have "more right than any people from the damn continent" but his outrage suggests that neither he nor his West Indian friends are treated as British subjects. Their sense of national belonging is adrift—are they British subjects? Foreigners? Immigrants? Colonial subjects come to the "Mother Country"? Moses's nickname for England itself—Mother Country—suggests how he views metropolitan

England in relationship to Jamaica: as a benevolent caretaker. Yet the novel complicates the myth of imperial benevolence through its representation of hardship, racism, and squalor that underpins even the comic aspects of the text. Moses's claim that his people "bleed to make this country prosperous" is suggestive of how the colonies are also treated as commodities, leaving colonized subjects in a kind of limbo. These shifting narratives about national identity cause England to "lose command of its own narrative identity," a loss that is evident in these three narratives, in which immigrants are caught in the disorienting limbo between belonging and being an outsider (3). Moses may legally be a British subject, but he is also a foreigner; he bears a double relation to Englishness because he is both an extension of imperial power and the necessary supplement that consolidated Englishness as separate from the colonies. Wendy Webster has explained this colonial relationship through the concept of "home," arguing that "the colonized were often represented in a pattern of familial imagery where they shared with colonizers membership of one imperial family" (xii). When Anna Morgan, Moses, and Lessing arrive in England, they do not feel a part of an "imperial family." Furthermore, these characters are forced to leave behind family members and friends, fracturing the families that they do have for a figurative imperial family that does not exist in reality. Webster points out that many recent migrants were treated as "a symbol of national decline" (xii). On a territorial level, "home" was unavailable to those who migrated to England, but homes were also scarce on the level of real estate. In all three texts, home is destabilized on both a personal and national level.

Despite the different approaches of each text, the boarding house is central to the experience of each immigrant character and these spaces influence the shape of each novel. Living spaces, then, are not background detail, but complex, living, changing beings that reshape and revise each immigrant's perspective on Englishness. Anxieties about housing, especially

about the temporary nature of the boarding house, pervade all three novels. This commonality suggests that the postcolonial novel processes the complexities of home through its material spaces. The metaphorical space of home is constructed in relation with the actual housing conditions, policies, and issues that immigrants faced in England. The shortages of rooms, privacy, and square footage in London's boarding houses are matched only by the expansion in Englishness through immigration, war, and changing patterns of renting, building, and buying. Each novelist that this chapter discussed approaches Englishness differently, but they share a sense of the disorienting expansion of national space. In contrast to texts earlier in the century, including *The Waves*, in which England's colonial territories are portrayed as threatening the England's interior, Rhys, Selvon, and Lessing operate on the assumption that Englishness is shifting. In the next chapter, I examine how the dispersal of Englishness develops toward the end of the century through the queer homes in the work of W.G. Sebald.

CHAPTER 4: QUEER SEBALD

> We must be insistently aware of […] how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparent innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology.
>
> -- Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*

Reviews of W.G. Sebald's novels (if you can call them novels) are rife with commentary on the complexities of his mixed-media work. Sebald mixes genres, combining travelogue, memoir, historical fiction, personal recollections, and encyclopedic accounts of subjects ranging from the migration patterns of moths to the history of prison architecture. His formal experimentation, as well as his use of photography to supplement his texts' prose, unsettles the generic boundaries that many readers expect from a novel.[223] Because they rarely offer the signposts that conventional novels rely on—chapter breaks, a stable narrative voice, or even consistent primary characters—Sebald's novels can be disorienting territory for new or unprepared readers. Reviewers have called Sebald's novels "unpindownable," "elusive," and "enigmatic."[224] Some have complained that his work has "no linearity whatsoever, the geography of his trip providing the only chronology or logic in the course taken by the text."[225] In addition to playing with genre, Sebald is deliberately evasive about his use of first-person narration. In many of his novels, Sebald both is and is not the first-person narrator.[226] In some of his work, the (quasi-fictional) narrator draws explicit comparisons with Sebald's biography—presenting Sebald's redacted passport photo as his own or sharing a birthdate with Sebald himself—yet in

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[223]The critical responses to Sebald suggest how his readers are unsettled by his generic choices. One critic argued that Sebald's "strategies of semantic isolation, alienation and dismantling […] constantly frustrated the reader's ingenuous and naïve longing for an effortless and transparent textual coherence" (Leone 89). Charles Saumarez Smith remarks that "[*Austerlitz*] could by no possible stretch of the imagination be described as a conventional guide." Ed McGown observes that that "digressions…form the substance of the work,"[223] and Alain De Botton that there "seem[s] to be no logical connections between the various parts" of Sebald's work.

[224] Moss, Stephen. "Falling for Vertigo by WG Sebald" *The Guardian UK* 20 January 2000.

[225] Sutcliffe, William. "Books: The loneliness of the emigrant" *The Independent* 5 December 1999.

[226] Sebald's quasi-autobiographical narrators evoke Doris Lessing's quasi-version of herself as the protagonist of *In Pursuit of the English*.

other moments, the fictional narrators diverge from Sebald in their occupations or biographical details.[227] These qualities and Sebald's uncanny form make one *Observer* critic wonder: "What are we to make of this?"[228]

This chapter takes up this reviewer's question—what are we to make of Sebald's oeuvre?—by arguing that we can understand Sebald's formal experimentation better by reading him as a queer stylist whose generic and formal experimentations deliberately respond to his characters' experiences of home.[229] Here, I follow Ahmed's invitation to think about queer sexuality as a spatial orientation, a "matter of residence; of how we inhabit spaces" (1). However, I want to extend Ahmed's reading of queer "residence" beyond sexual bodies to argue that many of the interiors in Sebald's work are queer spaces. By queer spaces, I mean those that are deliberately not "straight," but are instead circuitous, liminal, ruinous, marginalized, concealed, or disorienting.[230] My approach diverges from the critical consensus on Sebald, which appropriately (but somewhat narrowly) reads his work through the lenses of trauma, travel, or loss.[231] Rather than focusing on global instances of historical upheaval, I hone in on the smaller spaces through which Sebald's characters experience large-scale historical change. This focus follows from Sebald's own approach, which is to represent national trauma, especially of World

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[227] The former, *The Emigrants*; the latter, *Austerlitz*. It could also be as Gregory-Guider argues, that the Sebaldian version of a narrator occupies a different relationship to space-time than an ordinary human being: "The narrator frequently proclaims that while he finds himself always at a particular point in space-time, he could just as easily be somewhere else and in some other time period. It's as if the narrator occupies a kind of spatio-temporal nodal point that is a portal of access to—but also a point of removal from—various individual times and places."
[228] Charles Saumarez Smith. "Another Time, Another Place." *The Observer*, Saturday 29 September 2000
[229] As I will discuss in greater depth in the next section, I use the term "queer" to evoke transgression but also to signal various spatial-aesthetic manifestations of transgression, such as liminal spaces, digressive spaces, indirect or circuitous routes, etc.
[230] I draw on Halberstam and others, as I discuss in the next section.
[231] See John Beck, Karin Bauer, David Darby, Eluned Summers-Bremner, Christopher Gregory-Guider, Simon Ward, Jessica Dubow, Sheila Hones, Markus Zisselsberger, and Peter Arnds, among others.

War II, through the microscopic as well as the macroscopic.[232] In his novels, historical trauma is often represented indirectly through its effects on individuals, their homes, and their localized travel experiences. By focusing on the qualities of these spaces and how characters inhabit them, I offer a new way of understanding Sebald's unusual formal aesthetics. Sebald is a queer stylist, whose aesthetic choices, including his use of genre, his dispensation of narrative authority, and his disorienting sentence structures, follow from the queer spaces that his characters occupy.

This chapter draws on four of Sebald's texts, with particular focus on his 2001 novel, *Austerlitz*, in which Sebald most directly approaches the specter of the Holocaust that haunts his entire oeuvre.[233] This chapter proceeds as follows: a brief opening section examines the concept of "queer space." The second section on Sebald's queer style argues that his fractured aesthetics are an imaginative response to the coherence implicitly demanded by the categories of familial and national belonging. I then explore the politics of queer space to examine how the disrupted home is intertwined with a disrupted heterosexual family unit, national "home," and coherent sense of identity. A final section examines the various manifestations of Sebald's queer spaces, from hotel rooms to secret passageways.

What is Queer Space?

Studies of queer space generally take one of two approaches: describing queer bodies or desire in space, or thinking about theoretical models for identifying queer spaces.[234] The

[232] One remarkable aspect of Sebald's oeuvre is his oblique approach to World War II—though the war orbits his texts, he rarely approaches its violence or destruction directly. Instead, we see the effects of war through the strange rooms and houses his characters occupy.
[233] Given the intersections and overlaps among Sebald's work, I also include commentary on some of Sebald's earlier texts, including *Rings of Saturn*, *The Emigrants*, and *Vertigo*.
[234] Many studies of queer space begin with the closet, perhaps the single most recognizable spatial metaphor within queer studies. Though the term "coming out of the closet" is a portmanteau term established prior to Eve Sedgwick's foundational text, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, her work affirmed the metaphor as a spatial description of

corporeal approach, taken by Aaron Betsky, defines queer spaces in terms of how these spaces position bodies within them.[235] Others like Christopher Reed and Michael Brown examine how architecture houses queer bodies.[236] For these critics, queer spaces are often defined by absence: concealment, erasure, and denial.[237] Those who take a philosophical approach, like Jane Garrity or Judith Halberstam offer more abstract definitions of queer spaces, including "nonnormative locales" and spaces developed "in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction" (Garrity 1-2, Halberstam 1). For these theorists, queer spaces are either the work of queer bodies that transform "straight spaces" or they are produced in opposition to the nuclear family or the expectations of heterosexual reproduction.[238] I use these approaches in combination to see how the physical qualities of queer space might manifest themselves absent of queer bodies and how queer spaces engender alternatives to conventional familial and national structures.[239] Queer studies have been primarily focused on queer bodies in space and few

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homosexuality. The portmanteau "to come out of the closet" is thought to have combined the phrase "coming out" from the language of debutantes with the phrase "to closet," to secret away.

[235] In his reading, a queer space is an "in-between space" that is "liberat[ed]" from the "imprisoning characteristics of the modern city" (5).

[236] Reed argues that queer space is "renovated space" because the "obvious metaphors of knocking down barriers and opening up closets are clearly relevant to queer identity" (67); Brown claims that the closet is a spatial metaphor but also a literal place "where things are hidden…a small, confining place off a more central, open room" (2).Another example of queer architecture is the glass house in Tom Ford's 2009 film *A Single Man*, in which the neighbors literally and figuratively keep watch over the interior life of the gay protagonist.

[237] Critics also frequently use the idea of "absence" to describe Sebald's approach to the Holocaust. Eluned Summers-Bremner, for example, refers to Sebald' sense that "in Germany, language and knowledge were weighed down by a palpable absence" (315).

[238] Queer space develops as an alternative to the spatial instantiations of heterosexual institutions, including the family home or even the national monument.

[239] Other critics have suggested that "ruins" are a potentially queer space for how they evoke absence. As I suggested in my study of the Big House in chapter two, ruins can also be queer spaces, insofar as they challenge the orthodoxy of architecture or expose beams, foundations, and spaces that might be concealed in whole buildings. In a collection of essays on landscape theory, Jill Casid describes the concept of ruin as a disruption of normative spaces, if "ruin means theorizations based in embodied, sensate encounters with landscape that involve mucking around in the pleasures, difficulties, shame, and desires of the differences within and without" (187). Interestingly, queer approaches are absent from much of landscape and architectural theory. In a large anthology of "approaches" to landscape theory, Casid's essay was the only one that took a queer approach. If ruins "survive by appearing to be destroyed," then ruins are incomplete or alternative spaces, offering only a glimpse of their former selves (Lamb 32). Simon Ward has also argued that ruin is "central to both the content and the form" of Sebald's work and that ruin is "a site for projection, where narratives can be constructed to fill the gaps in the material" (58).

scholars address the aesthetics of these spaces absent of individual sexuality.[240] Although queer space is a term not often used outside of queer studies, I analyze the figurative and formal qualities of queer spaces to show how we can read queer politics and aesthetics—especially in relation to family and nation—through the physical spaces of home.

In Sebald's novels, sexuality is rarely addressed—in fact, his male narrators avoid the subject of sexuality almost altogether[241]—and the spaces in his text do not house explicitly queer bodies or political agendas. However, in both aesthetic and philosophical ways, Sebald's novels take up Ahmed's challenge to queer "ordinary perceptions" of the home. On an aesthetic level, the rooms represented in *Austerlitz* are defined by qualities that Bestky, Reed, and Brown have described as queer: out-of-the-way, hidden, preserved out of time, circuitous, derelict, uninhabitable for families, or recently renovated. Sebald's novels also show queer space as a way of orienting oneself within space—Austerlitz often approaches buildings from circuitous or tangential routes, rather than from "straight" lines, and he has a particular awareness of what is odd or out-of-place. Austerlitz's crooked orientation to home—his non-linear mode of approaching these spaces—attend to the oblique or multiple perspectives of any given room, to what Halberstam calls "other logics" of "movement and identification" (1). To the extent that Sebald's texts are travel guides, they are guides to the less-visible aspects of European monuments, to the back doors of bed and breakfasts or hotels, and to the out-of-place rooms and sensations in cultural locations like the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The fragmentation of seemingly monolithic institutions like family takes aesthetic form in the novel: a dilapidated house suggests a family fallen apart; a fractured narrative voice suggests fractured categories of

[240] See Aaron Betsky, Rebecca Fine Romanow, and Judith Halberstam, for example.
[241] Sebald's avoidance of sexuality is perhaps conspicuous given his texts' encyclopedic subject matter. It is possible to read the subordination of sexuality to other issues as a refusal to accept dominant ideologies about sexuality, or even to see his avoidance of the subject as an implicit confession. Secrecy has been a hallmark of queer readings, including D.A. Miller. See especially "Secret Subjects, Open Secrets."

belonging. On a philosophical level, Sebald's queer spaces challenge conventional ideologies that define familial and national affiliation.[242] If, as Lefebvre argues, space is a "product literally filled with ideologies," then Austerlitz's home spaces are the product of his fractured ideology on family and national homes. His novels frequently feature concealed spaces, especially the spaces hidden behind doors and windows, as they constitute the metaphorical repression of family life or childhood.[243] His travels take him to alternative or secret rooms in governmental buildings; they make visible the secret history that foster children must carry with them; they reveal alternative perspectives on train stations and estates to unsettle popular recollections of history. Queer space becomes, in Sebald's work, a way to see space beyond the "straight" lines that might assume uncomplicated familial or national belonging and point instead to the various complexities, conflicts, and multiplicities in any real or representative space.

An evocative example of a queer room that signals a queer orientation to home is Austerlitz's childhood bedroom in Wales, where he lives with a foster family as a child. As a child on the eve of World War II, Austerlitz is sent out of Prague on the *kindertransport*. Austerlitz is raised by a Methodist minister and his wife in Wales, and by the time the war is over, Austerlitz's parents are dead and he is disconnected from his home in manifold ways: he loses his house in Prague, his Czech citizenship, his Jewish faith, even his sense of territorial belonging. He is a refugee-exile in England and Wales, but his parents' death means that he cannot return "home." The novel, set in the present day, follows the adult Austerlitz as he returns to Prague to find his parents' apartment and implicitly to repair his impossibly fragmented relationship with language, religion, and nation. As Austerlitz recalls, his foster family, the

[242] "Reflections on the Politics of Space." *Antipode* Volume 8, Issue 2, pages 30–37, May 1976.
[243] Critics like John Zilcosky have cautiously characterized Sebald as a Holocaust writer, because he engages World War II, but he does so in indirect or enigmatic ways. In the larger tradition of World War II writing, hidden and concealed spaces are a recurrent theme, especially in popular representations like Anne Frank's Diary or contemporary movies like *Inglorious Basterds*.

Eliases, are a childless couple who live in a large, cold house. The house's unusual architectural attributes signal other oddities about life with the Eliases. For instance, Austerlitz associates the closed windows and doors of this house with his perceived "captivity" in England. The couple's emotional repression is signaled by the locked top floor of the house, and their frosty relationship with each other and Austerlitz by the constant chill inside the house.[244] Austerlitz's bedroom has an especially strange feature that symbolizes his queer orientation toward the emotional and territorial registers of "home": his room contains a walled-up window that is apparent only if you compare the house's exterior to its interior. This window goes unnoticed for years, because, Austerlitz tells the narrator, he could not be "both outside and inside a house at the same time" and therefore "I did not register [the difference] until I was thirteen or fourteen, although it must have been troubling me throughout my childhood in Bala" (45). From the outside, the house appears "unchanged," but the interior conceals an unexpected deviation. From the inside, what appears to be a wall in fact contains a hidden space between the wall and the window.

The hidden space is the architectural equivalent of Austerlitz's emotional repression, especially the repressed trauma of leaving his parents in Prague, where they die in camps. This strange bedroom is both a cause and an effect of Austerlitz's disoriented relationship to home, and he compares the "walled up window" to his own mind, which is "walled up" against remembering the loss of his family.[245] Austerlitz claims that his "walled up" mind "preserved me from my own secret, systematically preventing me from drawing the obvious conclusions" (44). To "preserve" is to keep safe from injury or damage but also to maintain something in its

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[244] The locked top floor also suggests psychological repression. That is, if an attic is a spatial symbolic for the mind, as it is in *Jane Eyre*, the locked upper story suggests that the Eliases are keeping something repressed. This reading is confirmed by the Eliases' coldness to Austerlitz and each other, and the boy's recollection that he never saw affection pass between his foster parents.

[245] When he does remember the loss, he describes it as seeing himself finally "with the utmost clarity as that child suddenly cast out of his familiar surroundings: reason was powerless against the sense of rejection and annihilation which I had always suppressed, and which was now breaking through the walls of its confinement" (228).

original state. Preservation has a queer effect on space, because a preserved space remains the same while everything around it changes.[246] On a narrative level, these passages imply—but do not describe—what Austerlitz conceals. The walled-up window is a metaphor that extends to the form of the text itself, which at times preserves secrets from the reader or signals moments of concealment, erasure, and absence in the narrative. The queer space of Austerlitz's childhood bedroom shows how the unsettled aspects of space are not merely generative, as Massey might see them, but also disruptive. From Austerlitz's childhood alienation to the many seasick travelers in Sebald's work, queer space is both the cause and the effect of characters' disorientation.[247] To read Sebald's novels is to enter into a narrative space that produces, as well as represents, such disorientation.

The Queer House of Fiction

The novel as a geographic phenomenon

In her study of literary space, Sheila Hones draws on literary geography by arguing that "the novel can be understood as a geographical phenomenon in itself…the novel happens in space, is the product of interrelations, emerges in the dimension of coexistence, and is always in a state of becoming" (254). In Hones's description of the novel as a "geographic phenomenon," she claims that the novel as a space is fluid.[248] Her description echoes Virginia Woolf's treatment of textual space as contained but open, changing as new readers and new historical contexts surround it. If we consider Sebald's novels as textual spaces, as bound by front and back covers, filled with chapters like interrelated rooms, then we see how the space *of* his novels follow from

[246] The queer effects of preservation are seen again at the Palace of Justice.
[247] See the dizzying effect of Bull's Inn in *Rings of Saturn*; the image of the hotel at sea in *The Emigrants* (124-137, in particular); and the various moments where hotels are at sea in *Vertigo* (see Venice, 63; see St. Martin's home, 45; see Verona, 77).
[248] See echoes with Doreen Massey's *For Space*, pp. 3-6.

the space *in* his novels. The form of Sebald's texts often follows the content within—winding passages describe mazes, encyclopedic passages to describe a library or an institution of knowledge, historical digressions to describe a museum, disorienting passages to describe a character who is lost, interconnected digressions to describe the search for family history.[249] At the same time, Sebald's queer style actively unsettles convention by disrupting generic categorization, dispensing with the illusion of exactitude, and disorienting the process of reading by insisting on unsystematic sentence-, paragraph-, and textual-structures. It is difficult to "feel at home" reading Sebald's texts because his stylistic choices actively destabilize readerly expectation.

Queering generic categorization

Most of Sebald's text refuse to be categorized generically, a stylistic move that intensifies the characters' own refusals to be characterized on the basis of nationality, language, or family. Sebald's novels incorporate historical documents, memoir, photographs and numerous references to other literary works along with his imagined characters. He mixes genres and mediums to an uncanny effect; his novels occupy what one reviewer calls "an unsettled, disputed territory on the border of fiction and fact."[250] The photographs challenge his novels' statuses as either fiction or history; Maya Barzilai has called his use of photography "an emblem for the uncanny reemergence of the past" (213).

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[249] In *Rings of Saturn*, Browne's library (p. 271-2) is a collection of oddities, a museum, and a library in one: "…there is also to be found a catalogue of remarkable books, listing pictures, antiquities and sundry singular items that may have formed part of a collection put together by Browne but were more likely products of his imagination, the inventory of a treasure house that existed purely in his head" (p. 271). The text works as a strange imaginary museum itself, also a "treasure house" existing in the narrator's head, even as the connections between them are historical, literary, and visual (like Browne's).

[250] *The New Yorker* December 14, 2011 "Why You Should Read W. G. Sebald" by Mark O'Connell.

His novels often take the form of stories within stories, which has a doubly queer effect. Many of them record intimate conversations, often between two men.[251] This form destabilizes the convention of a single authoritative narrator by nesting stories within other stories.[252] His stories are not told straightforwardly, an aesthetic choice that is a reminder of the text's status as a fiction and of the subjective orientation of the story. In one section of *Austerlitz*, Austerlitz's mother's story is relayed through Vera, which is relayed through Austerlitz, which is relayed to the reader through the narrator. Although the narrator might present this version of the story as truth, the layered approach invites us to consider the fallibility of human recollection. Narrative authority is dispersed and mobilized throughout the space of the text. This works as an argument about fractured national power. In Sebald's work, Englishness (as well as Germanness and Frenchness and so on) is a fiction that is narrated from multiple, and often competing, perspectives. The dispersal of narrative wholeness is also an argument about the dispersal of national wholeness.

Sebald's other novels use unconventional organizational structures that offer few cues to orient the reader.[253] The dissolution of plot invites the reader to approach his texts unsystematically, rather than obediently following the course of an omniscient narrator. Sebald's novels never tell a tidy story and rarely tell a continuous one, dispensing with the conventions of primary characters and distinct narrative arcs. Sebald himself admitted to taking unusual routes

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[251] *Austerlitz* is staged as a series of conversations between two male travelers: Austerlitz himself and the narrator, an unnamed man who meets Austerlitz in a train station early in the novel. The text is framed by this conversation, with occasional asides to remind the reader that the story is second hand: "As I might perhaps be aware, said Austerlitz, taking up his tale again at our next meeting […]" (275). The depth and intimacy of the conversation is especially distinct toward the end of the novel, when the narrator's voice seems to merge with Austerlitz's own voice.

[252] In a sense his stories are like matryoshka dolls, stories inside stories inside stories.

[253] Both *The Emigrants* and *Vertigo* are divided into four sections. These sections are not entirely discrete (as they might be in a collection of short stories), nor do they offer enough linearity to be read as a continuous narrative (as the separate chapters of a novel often do). Instead, they are connected by the thread of an anonymous narrator or motifs like the Nabokovian butterfly man that recurs throughout *The Emigrants*.

through his subject matter.[254] The reader, too, finds meanings in haphazard ways, and is often forced to turn back to find her way. While Sebald's novels can seem disconnected, the texts often give clues about how they can be read. *Rings of Saturn*, for instance, uses geographic logic to shift from one topic to another. As the narrator travels, the world around him triggers his reflection on the environment—the text likewise shifts course based on his travels, his research, and the places he inhabits. Without the narrative arc of conventional plot, we are encouraged to read the novel as the literary counterpart of the novel's settings.[255] When the narrator visits a library, the text is structured like a library (it moves through ordered sequences and topics); when the narrator visits a labyrinth, the text resembles a labyrinth (it winds mazily around one topic). Travel, a hallmark of Sebald's work, is a compelling metaphor for the form of his texts, as the narratives wander, sidetracked by offhand references and discussions as easily as side streets and piazzas sidetrack Sebald's travelers.[256] If the reader is a traveler in a new land, then Sebald's novels are disorienting landscapes, offering just enough landmarks for the wanderer to try to get her bearings, but never a map to guide her through.

Unsettling narrative (and national) authority

By dispensing with the illusion of exactitude, Sebald's work unsettles the idea of narrative coherence. This stylistic move echoes the unsettling of coherent national belonging. For Sebald, the nation is also a fiction, and his characters break the rules of the stories that nations tell about inclusion, belonging, and citizenship. By inviting the reader to question the veracity of his stories, Sebald is also inviting us to question the veracity of the boundaries of national

[254] In one interview, he confessed, "Not even my PhD research was done systematically. It was always done in a random, haphazard fashion. And the more I got on, the more I felt that, really, one can find something only in that way, i.e., in the same way in which, say, a dog runs through a field.." *Emergence of Memory*, 93.
[255] By conventional plot, I mean the narrative arc of character/problem, conflict, resolution.
[256] The relationship between travel and Sebald's form has been thoroughly discussed by critics. See, for instance, Markus Zisselsberger's *The Undiscover'd Country: W.G. Sebald and the Poetics of Travel*.

fictions. In "All'estero," one section of *Vertigo*, the circuitous narrative voice deliberately mixes the dream world with the waking world. The narrator describes going to sleep in his hotel in Vienna, and in the morning when he awakes, he recalls a dream about being on a ship. The recollection is phrased in such a way that the reader seems intentionally set adrift, forced to wonder whether she is reading about his dream or about reality:

> I felt as if I had crossed a wide stretch of water during the hours of my nocturnal absence. Before I opened my eyes I could see myself descending the gangway of a large ferry, and hardly had I stepped ashore but I resolved to take the evening train to Venice, and before that to spend the day with Ernst Herbeck in Klosterneuburg (37-38).

Here, a dream becomes a reality even as the reality of travel becomes a dream. Does the narrator "step ashore" in his dream, deciding to visit a different country while still half-asleep? Or has he already traveled across national boundaries? Nation is deliberately presented as a fiction, not unlike a dream. In *The Emigrants*, the narrator describes at length a dream in which he sees a woman with a rabbit on a leash, attended by a footman dressed in green who feeds the rabbit cauliflower. The next day, while walking through the city, the narrator is confronted by this reality on the Promenade des Planches: "there she was…with a white Angora rabbit lolloping along on a lead. She was also attended by a clubman in acid green livery, who would stoop down whenever the rabbit refused to go on and feed it a little of the enough cauliflower" (126). The absurdity of the scene invokes doubts about its veracity, of course, but the scene works as a reminder to the reader that the narrator's memory, like the memories of the characters within the story, are unreliable.

Finding one's way

On the level of his sentences and paragraphs, Sebald's texts perform the disorientation that his characters seem to feel when they navigate the convoluted grounds of citizenship. Digressive, meandering sentences make the reader feel astray. In *Austerlitz*, the narrator's ostensible desire for stability is counteracted by his sentence structure. Describing Austerlitz's storytelling capability, the narrator reflects: "From the first I was astonished by the way Austerlitz put his ideas together as he talked, forming perfectly balanced sentences out of whatever occurred to him, so to speak, and the way in which, in his mind, the passing on of his knowledge seemed to become a gradual approach to a kind of historical metaphysic, bringing remembered events back to life" (13). This 62-word sentence, with its numerous subordinate clauses and multiple modifiers, is characteristic of Sebald's style. Though he is describing Austerlitz's "perfectly balanced" sentences or the "passing on of knowledge," he calls attention to his own disorderly storytelling. The sentences hedges ("so to speak," "the way in which") and uses distinctly wordy phrasing ("the passing on of his knowledge," "a gradual approach to a kind of").[257] Unlike Sebald's other texts, Austerlitz contains no chapter breaks or distinct sections; in fact, it does not even have paragraph breaks. The entire novel is presented as one single, unbroken flow, without paragraph or section breaks. The various portions of the story bleed together. This has two simultaneous and contradictory effects: one is to indicate the connectedness of the different portions of Austerlitz's story; the second is to suggest that

[257] These grammatical digressions, and the circular routes of his language, reflect Austerlitz's own comments about the processes of language, when he remarks that language is like a "an old city full of streets and squares, nooks and crannies" (124). In his sentences, Sebald explores syntactical nooks and crannies. Navigating language and form is a spatial act in *Austerlitz*. Language itself is like "an old city," and its streets offer numerous routes through which the speaker can travel. Sebald (and through him, Austerlitz and his narrator) rarely take the most direct, clearest, or straightest route. Instead, Sebald's prose is full of such meandering, digressive sentences.

categorization—and with it, easy comprehension—is out of reach. Neither text nor protagonist is easily classified.

Language performs the disorientation that Austerlitz feels, often by using spatial metaphors to describe psychological developments. One especially dramatic example of Sebald's syntactical attempts to disorient is the following single sentence describing a film that Maximilian, Austerlitz's father, viewed about a Nazi Party rally:[258]

> Not only did the overawed spectators witness the Führer's airplane descending slowly to earth through towering mountain ranges of cloud; not only was the tragic history they all shared invoked in the ceremony honoring the war dead during which, as Maximilian describe it to us, Hitler and Hess and Himmler strode down the broad avenue lined, in straight serried ranks with columns and companies created by the power of the new state out of a host of immovable German bodies, to the accompaniment of a funeral march which stirred the innermost soul of the entire nation; not only might one see warriors pledging themselves to die for the Fatherland, and the huge forests of flags mysteriously swaying as they moved away by torchlight into the dark—no, said Vera, Maximilian told us that a bird's-eye view showed a city of white tents extending to the horizon, from which as day broke the Germans emerged singly, in couples, or in small groups, forming a silent procession and pressing ever closer together

[258] Another example is Austerlitz's description of a butcher shop near his childhood home (25). Standing over a pit at the fort at Breendonk, a place he recalls visiting in 1967, Austerlitz describes being thrust back into his memory. The act of remembering is spatial: as the floor "sink[s] further and further," Austerlitz's memory "rose from the abyss." Memories of home are hidden and then recovered and with it is the potent queer imagery of the butcher with his "thick hose" and the "doors" that enclose these closeted memories "flung open" by the view of the pit. Austerlitz's "childhood terrors," as he describes them, are often related to enclosed or hidden spaces—the laundry room, the sunken pit, or the butcher's back room. His convoluted sentence structure is interrupted repeatedly by sub-clauses. The subject of the sentence—Austerlitz's repressed memory of home—is approached indirectly both psychologically and syntactically.

> as they all went in the same direction, following, so it seemed, some higher bidding, on their way to the Promised Land at last after long years in the wilderness (169).

This passage performs as well as describes the political power of the Nazi Party. The size of the sentence—200 words—reflects the totality of the Nazi's political authority and the speaker's desire to understand this authority. Its various clauses catalog a series of Party actions to demonstrate Nazi influence on the brink of war: Hitler flying ahead, ceremonies honoring fallen soldiers, processions and funeral marches, Nazi ceremonies, and the display of Nazi flags in the city. On a literal level, the passage conveys Maximilian's sense that the Nazis were ubiquitous. At the same time, the sentence's multiple and rapid clauses persuasively performs the ubiquity of the Nazis. The reader can hardly take a breath, but is spiraled through clause after clause. Moreover, the sentence is constructed in the negative ("not only"), giving the sense of a perpetually greater number of rally acts that are simply not listed. The grammatical subject and verb –"Maximilian told us"—indicates the confession at the heart of the sentence, even as it reminds us that the story we read comes fourth-hand. In fact, the subject and verb are constructed as an interruption to the rest of the sentence—Vera cuts in, effectively reminding the reader that she is absorbing a narrative inside a narrative inside a narrative inside a narrative: Maximilian telling Vera telling Austerlitz telling the narrator about yet another narrative: the film itself. This interruption reminds us of the fictionality of the recollection but it also works as a remind that the seemingly-ubiquity of the Nazi party is also a construction.

Sebald's stylistic choices are disorienting to the reader, who learns to read both forward and backward in order to stay oriented amidst the prose, but they also unsettle a reader

accustomed to finding either straightforward prose or uncomplicated generic forms.[259] Sebald's treatment of language replicates the arguments within his texts about political belonging, the capacity or necessity of national boundaries, or the sanctity of ideologies that privilege family, marriage, or reproduction. Many of Sebald's travelers are interested in categorization, classification, and totality. They explore libraries, archives, and encyclopedias. They take microscopic and macroscopic views of the landscapes and buildings they study. And yet despite their persistent interest in categories of knowledge or belonging, many of these travelers cannot themselves be categorized. They are neither rooted nor in exile; they are orphaned but not entirely disconnected from family. And yet, because citizenship effectively demands tidy categorization, many of these characters find themselves at odds with the organizational structures that they seem so interested in. Formally, the texts respond to this tension between the desire for and insufficiency of categorization. Sebald's aesthetic choices are staked in political choices.

Sexual and Familial Disorientation

In *Austerlitz*, as well as Sebald's other novels, queer spaces unsettle the "home" as both a figurative and ideological configuration. War disrupts "home" on a territorial level (cities are bombed, the map of Europe is renegotiated, and centers of government and power shift) and the local level (the rooms, apartments, offices, and hotels where his texts take place are disorderly, falling apart, or in flux). In *Austerlitz*, home is rarely associated with security or hominess; instead, Austerlitz's interiors embody Massey's claim that home was never a "safe haven" that offered "coherence, stability and authenticity" (65). Many of Sebald's characters have lost

[259] In this sense, Sebald's texts are a bit like *Finnegans Wake*, in that they ask the reader to learn to read in unconventional ways.

families, homes, lovers, or cities they once lived in and the fractures of family and geography take shape through rooms: concealed rooms and hidden windows, apartments sparingly furnished though they have been occupied for years, lost or forgotten apartments, ruined cities, and dilapidated houses.[260] World War II damages both families and the boundaries of national belonging, rewriting family trees along with the map of Europe. The location and ideology of "home" is disturbed by war and queer rooms call attention to these disturbances: rooms and walls are out-of-place, arrangements are uninhabitable for families, and characters make homes in unexpected places, like drafty studios above businesses. These queer homes expose fractured relationships to family and national belonging.

Familial metaphors are often evoked to describe national allegiances—the term "forefather," for instance, describes both the past generations of a family and the founder of a nation. Austerlitz's broken family fractures his sense of home in both material and ideological capacities: he is displaced from his family apartment and from his country of origin at the same moment. Austerlitz's resulting "homelessness" continues into adulthood, because he remarks that he still has no native language, no native place, no family of his own, and no place to call home. Because national affiliations are historically based on kinship roles, Austerlitz's fractured family structure is evident in his relationship to both material and territorial "home." Jacqueline Stevens has argued that the historical relationship between birth, reproduction and nationality overemphasizes genetic lineage in producing citizenship.[261] She has argued for new, non-lineage-based requirements as a way to "queer" the emotional and bureaucratic transference of citizenship. A queer approach might emphasize, as Austerlitz does, the liminal and complex

[260] In this aspect, Sebald's characters take after Bowen's, and Farrell's. Like Lois and the Major, Sebald's characters are often orphaned, living in temporary houses, unable or unwilling to return to their country of "origin" if they have one, and unsure what they will do in the future.
[261] See *Reproducing the State*.

relationship between a subject, his home, and his sense of national belonging. Austerlitz's refusal to marry, have children, or settle in a permanent home in either England or Prague implicitly demands an alternative—albeit a complicated one—to the stability of home that citizenship requirements imply.

Sebald's novels feature childless and parentless characters whose broken familial and national bonds play out through their personal spaces. In this section, I examine Austerlitz's familial history alongside that of Max Ferber, a figure from Sebald's earlier novel, *The Emigrants*, who is a kind of precursor to Austerlitz's character. Ferber, like Austerlitz, escapes to British territories before World War II. Ferber too attends boarding school in England, finds himself in an asylum (Ferber literally, Austerlitz only figuratively), and describes himself as an exile who can never return home. The nation-less character is a familiar trope in Sebald's work; Mark Anderson has argued that most of Sebald's fiction produces "a subtle interplay of national identities in which no one is truly native" (106). In *The Emigrants* and *Austerlitz*, "native" national identities are unsettled by forced emigration, by travel, and by familial displacement. In these novels, the queer home is a reflection of fractured families and related fractured geographies of post-war Europe.

Max Ferber has a queer orientation to home because of his displaced relationship to family. The character is based on the German painter, Frank Auerbach, who escaped Germany like Austerlitz on the *kindertransport* when he was eight. In *The Emigrants*, Ferber leaves Germany for England as a child, where he lives with his uncle in "a little émigré hotel in Bloomsbury" (189). Ferber spends his childhood in a series of hotels and boarding houses—all of them transitional spaces—that leads him to believe that he is living in a series of "prison[s] or mental asylum[s]" (189). His rooms reflect his disconnected relationship to "home," in both the

material and psychological sense. His English rooms are a prison, rather than a safe place. The occupants of a hotel, like the occupants of a prison or asylum, inhabit their rooms only temporarily. Institutional rooms and hotel rooms deny their occupants the sense of hominess that comes from a sense of permanence, even if that permanence is an illusion. Prisons, asylums, and hotels are all intermediary spaces, not quite temporary but not permanent either. Occupants rarely call their rooms "home" no matter how long they have lived there. They are homeless at home. Ferber extends the comparison between the émigré hotel and the prison/asylum by remarking that he cannot sleep because he "is pinned down, in English beds of that kind, by bedding which has been tucked under the mattress all the way round" (189). Tucked in tightly, Ferber evokes a strapped-down patient in an asylum. As a child, his hotel approximates a prison, symbolizing his captivity in England. Austerlitz, too, describes himself as "captive" in this new country. For both, their rooms are not places of protection, but of confinement.

As an adult, when Ferber moves to Manchester, he remains without family or children, and his rooms reflect his non-reproductive relationship to "home." When he searches for housing, he finds an "immigrant city" where he lives in a hotel. The art studio in which the narrator first finds him, is described as a "curious hostelry" (163), with furniture arranged around the easel in the center of the room. There Ferber complains that "the entire furniture was advancing, millimeter by millimeter, upon the central space" (161). This room is pushing him out, its furniture encroaching upon him threateningly, evocative of the violence of being pinned down in his hotel bed as a child. His other "home" is a café "located in the basement of an otherwise unoccupied building that looked as if it might fall down at any moment" (162). His first hotel, his studio, and the café are marginal rooms not meant to be made into homes—basements in unoccupied buildings, drafty studios not meant to be apartments, émigré hotels.

Both Ferber and Austerlitz are childless, and their homes seem built specifically for orphaned, lost, unmarried, or childless people. When Ferber dies, the text emphasizes his homelessness in relation to his lack of family: he dies of pulmonary emphysema in a hospital for the homeless and unemployed. The hospital, previously a Victorian workhouse, is located in a neighborhood the narrator describes as a dilapidated "wasteland" in south Manchester. The narrator experiences the hospital as a space marginal to the rest of the city, a temporary, liminal space where the patients—despite their shared emotional and familial territory—don't belong.

Austerlitz, too, is at what Ahmed would call an "oblique" angle to the straight "lines" of family and reproduction that are intertwined with citizenship. Austerlitz's damaged relationship with his parents, the result of his forced migration away from his family in Prague, causes him to feel that he does not belong, either in Prague or in London, where he lives. His apartment in the East End reflects his disorientation toward home as a matter of his relationship to family. When the narrator visits Austerlitz at his home in the East End, he finds a nearly empty apartment, evocative of Austerlitz's parents' place in Prague or the emptied country homes in the English countryside. Austerlitz lives down a road that is so isolated that the narrator thinks, "no one had ever trodden" on it (118). The single room has very little furniture, but many photographs, which he pushes back and forth on his table, "arranging them in an order depending on their family resemblances" only to abandon them into forgotten piles (119). This spatial act—ordering and reordering "families" based on brief resemblances—suggests a visual reordering of the family unit. Austerlitz does on a representative scale what the war has done on the scale of human lives: arbitrarily disconnect and reconnect individuals into temporary family units, or abandon them entirely.

Austerlitz's queer orientation toward family and reproductive structures frequently manifests itself as a lost sense of direction, especially when it comes to finding his way home.[262] Austerlitz's return to Prague to discover his childhood home and to try to recover childhood memories is neither a homecoming nor a confrontation with the unknown. Instead, it is an encounter with Austerlitz's queer relationship to national belonging through his encounter with the Czech language. In both the city and the grammar, Austerlitz finds himself disoriented:

> If language may be regarded as an old city full of streets and squares, nooks and crannies, with some quarters dating from far back in time while others have been torn down, cleaned up, and rebuilt, and with suburbs reaching further and further into the surrounding country, then I was like a man who has been abroad a long time and cannot find his way through this urban sprawl anymore, no longer knows what a bus stop is for, or what a back yard is, or a street junction, an avenue or a bridge (124).

In this passage, Austerlitz describes being lost in Prague as a touchstone for his lost citizenship and his (related) lost language skills. His search for language is like his aimless wandering through Prague—he searches the spaces on the margins, nooks and crannies, as he tries to reorient himself. Of course, his figurative language has literal resonances, as well. In imagining that he occupies a strange linguistic territory, Austerlitz claims to be *like* "a man who has been abroad a long time" though he is also *actually* a man who has been abroad a long time and returns, not only to the metaphorical streets of the Czech language but to the literal streets of Prague. The psychological condition of "not knowing" and not remembering has geographic

[262] In another scene, Austerlitz recalls asking Vera, "how do the squirrels know where they've buried their hoards?" The "buried hoard" that Austerlitz imagines he might find—a cache of memories about belonging that materialize out of memories of his parents—is unavailable to him in Prague. Unlike the squirrels, for Austerlitz, there is no going home again.

effects. Rather than navigating smoothly through the streets of language (or the streets of Prague), Austerlitz occupies only the liminal spaces between. His inability to figuratively find his way, confused by backyards, bus stops and bridges, echoes his sense of national disorientation, where he feels lost in the streets of national belonging, language, and family.

Austerlitz repeatedly claims to be a national exile, a condition brought to bear by his childhood immigration but also by changing political structures and geographic landscapes in Europe that make it difficult for him to "return" when the war is over. But his exile is also a personal, intimate exile. As an adult, Austerlitz remarks on his status as an outsider, saying:

> I came to realize how isolated I was and always have been, among the Welsh as much as among the English and French. It never occurred to me to wonder about my true origins…nor did I ever feel that I belonged to a certain social class, professional group, or religious confession…it was a very long time since I had felt able to make personal friendships. No sooner did I become acquainted with someone than I feared I had come too close, no sooner did someone turn towards me than I began to retreat (125-6).

This confession is a crucial moment in the text because it articulates the relationship between Austerlitz's personal exile and his national exile. Because Austerlitz feels exiled from the nation—he is not at home in Wales, England, or France—he also feels exiled from other forms of belonging—class, religion, profession, even friendship. Austerlitz's homelessness manifests itself on a national level, but also on a personal level. He refuses intimacy, reproduction, and the creation of his own sense of "home."

His few intimate relationships are with men: Gerald, his boarding school roommate, and implicitly the narrator with whom he shares these stories and confessions. Like Austerlitz,

Gerald is an exile whose sexuality is ambiguous in its absence. Gerald raises carrier pigeons, which he admires for their infallible ability to find their way home, regardless of weather conditions. An unflappable sense of direction, orientated toward "home," is a quality that both Gerald and Austerlitz clearly lack, but the text is not sentimental about their disorientation or homelessness. Instead, Gerald tells Austerlitz that he wishes he could "make the pigeons fly the other way," that is, from "their home in Barmouth to his place of *exile* in Oswestry" (114, italics my own). If the pigeons could fly toward "exile," then either Oswestry becomes more like a "home," or the pigeons become more like Gerald. Gerald's fascination with the pigeon's homing ability also signals the text's larger interest in navigation, particularly in queer approaches to navigation. For Ahmed, alternative points of navigation challenge the fixity of the Greenwich-London meridian point, a point that assumes a certain "straightness" of national lines and lines of orientation. If the idea of East and West are based on this fixed point, then as Ahmed argues, "what is 'East' is actually what is east of the prime meridian, the zero point of longitude. The East as well as the left is thus orientated; *it acquires its direction only by taking a certain point of view as given*" (Ahmed, 14 emphasis in original). For Gerald, the given point of view is *not* a set orientation toward "home," but an orientation toward the unknown, toward exile.[263] Gerald's desire to redirect the pigeons, away from established orientation and into "exile," reflects the text's larger interest in alternative routes and spaces, and its interruption of prevailing spatial and navigational habits. By Austerlitz's account, Gerald disrupts "the natural order of things" when the two develop photographs together in the darkroom at school, a place where Gerald makes "the shadows of reality, so to speak, emerge out of nothing on the exposed paper, as memories do in the middle of the night" (77). Gerald is a character who is able to draw Austerlitz's secrets and memories out of hiding, like he is able to coax images into life in the darkroom. This passage

[263] Gerald actually does fly into the unknown on one of his flights, vanishing into the air never to return again.

alludes to intimacy between the two boys in the darkroom, yet the text is purposefully elusive about whether such intimacy is sexual. The friendship ends, almost abruptly, when Gerald never returns from a flight in the Alps. The friendship, like Austerlitz himself, is "lost in space" (117).

For most of Sebald's characters, the desire to escape nationhood is always counterbalanced by the bureaucratic necessity of citizenship. His characters occupy a liminal space between citizenship and the renunciation of the nation, even if renunciation is only an unvoiced desire. Austerlitz does not identify as being from either Prague or Wales. Instead, he occupies a liminal, or queer space, between the places he's lived. Rather than presenting a "queer nation" as a utopian alternative, Sebald shows queer familial and national orientations as a reality of post-war migration and exile. In *Vertigo*, for instance, the narrator's repudiation of his citizenship goes from a cosmopolitan wish to a bureaucratic (and unpleasant reality). Up late in his hotel in Limone, the narrator wishes abstractly to be free of nationhood: "How I wished during those sleepless hours that I belonged to a different nation, or, better still, to none at all" (94). The next morning, when he prepares to leave the hotel, the narrator realizes that the front desk has lost his passport, the physical evidence of his citizenship. Without proof of his citizenship, he is also without the privileges that citizenship bestows, including the ability to travel between countries. The lost passport fulfills, inadvertently, the narrator's desire to be nationless by evoking the loss of his nationhood. Paradoxically, of course, the narrator cannot escape his nation—or even the city of Limone—without bureaucratic documentation of his national affiliation. Citizenship both roots him and allows him to roam. The condition of perpetual travel affords Sebald's characters the greatest possibility of feeling outside the nation, but always with the provision that total renunciation of nationhood is impossible. His characters often seem to occupy the queer or liminal position of being forced exiles or involuntary migrants.

In interviews, Sebald himself articulates a queer orientation toward national belonging. Though he refuses to renounce nationality altogether, he also refuses to affirm or celebrate citizenship, leaving his national belonging as restless as the characters that wander his novels. Though Sebald grew up in Germany, he claimed to have felt "uncomfortable" there even as a child.[264] And although he left Germany for England, where he studied, lived, and worked for thirty years, he did not find a home there either. He was fluent in English, yet he always wrote in German. In numerous interviews, he rejected the idea that he ever felt at home. In one, the interviewer remarks that Sebald may have "felt most comfortable in a place in which he was foreign," but Sebald countered the charge: "I don't feel at home [in Norwich] in any sense" (*Emergence* 166). Regardless of whether Sebald's biography and own restlessness leads him to certain literary or stylistic choices, his texts privilege what Line Patt calls the "deliberately indeterminate" (*Emergence* 166). Sebald himself claimed that his formal choices were sympathetic to those who are marginalized; he admitted, "I do like to listen to people who have been sidelined" (*Emergence* 84). Sebald's "sidelined" people include his political exiles like Austerlitz, but also other "sidelined" figures, characters without families, without spouses, without passports. Much like the orphaned Lois in Bowen's *The Last September*, who searches for a more fitting "elsewhere" that she can belong, the Sebaldian traveler is often a restless figure looking for an "elsewhere" that better matches his interior landscape.[265] Like Lois, Sebald's characters often seem lost and unable to return home, even if there were a home to go back to.

[264] Sebald, W.G. "Who Is W.G. Sebald?" Carole Angier. *Emergence of Memory*.
[265] Lois longs to escape to "some ideal no-place" (Bowen 127).

"Elsewhere" becomes a kind of non-place, a queer space in between being lost and being at home.[266]

Queer Spaces

Hotels and Hostels

Building on previous sections, in which I argued that Sebald's queer styling is part of his texts' larger arguments about displaced familial and national belonging, this section examines the queer spaces of "home." These queer homes—hotel rooms, hostels, hallways, and labyrinths—both produce and reflect their inhabitants' queerness. This double relation makes the "home" a slippery space in Sebald's work: because Austerlitz is exiled from his parents, he does not feel at home in his foster house in Wales; yet because Austerlitz is in a strange home in Wales, he cannot feel at home. In *Austerlitz*, real and representational spaces are inextricable. This section argues that many of the significant rooms within Sebald's novels can be read as queer spaces, including hotels and secret passageways. To argue this, I draw on Marc Augé's definition of "non-places," what he describes as in-between spaces of transit or travel that are a hallmark of the globalized world. For Augé, the non-space is defined by transit and movement, in opposition to empire, dwelling, home, and belonging. I adapt this definition of non-space to see these spaces as also queer, especially in their resistance to dwelling, reproduction, and the myth of a stable home. Although Augé does not explicitly describe the non-space as queer, his definition of "non-place" as a space for outsiders, where "social bonds" and "collective histor[ies]" are less strong suggests that the non-place is developed as an alternative to conventional (even heterosexual) ideological and material spaces (ix). The non-place is a useful

[266] See Augé's *Non-Places*, in which he defines the "non-place" as a place of transience, which is both a symbolic *space* and an actual *place*, the kind of space "formed in relation to certain ends" such as travel, but also a space defined by the "relations that individuals have" with it.

designation for the hotel room, B&B, or train compartment that Sebald's characters often inhabit. These spaces are represented as an extension of characters' social and psychological orientations, often explicitly at odds with nuclear family structures or settled geographic or national belonging. Sebald's novels figure orphans, exiles, migrants, prisoners, travelers, and servants. The recurring traveler in Sebald's novels sets out without clear purpose, without maps or directions, and without a sense of the psychological motives propelling him to travel in the first place.[267] In this sense, Sebald's traveler enthusiastically takes up Ahmed's directive to "[change] direction" because "risking departure from the straight and narrow, makes new futures possible, which might involve going astray, getting lost, or even becoming queer" (554). Sebald's travelers do not merely risk departure from the "straight and narrow," they seem to set out to get lost, aware of a greater range of perspectives from which to view a space. Unlike a man in his hometown, who might walk without noticing the familiar landscape around him, the Sebaldian traveler observes the sky above him, the view from the city from a clock tower, the unseen alleyway, and the unnoticed corner.

The hotel room, the emblematic "non-space" is a reminder of the perpetual traveler's queer orientation to the space and ideology of "home." In Sebald's novels, the hotel is a queer space because it signals the exile's unconventional relationship to familial and national homes. The hotel is a non-space because it both produces and accommodates travelers. For some

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[267] In the novels that this chapter discusses— *Vertigo*, *The Emigrants*, and *Austerlitz*—each opens at least one chapter with a scene where an unnamed narrator describes setting out on a purposeless journey to a place he seems to have picked at random:
"[I]n the autumn of 1966, when I had decided, for various reasons, to move to England, I had a barely adequate notion of what the country was like or how, thrown back entirely on my own resources, I would fare abroad" ("Max Ferber" TE 149).
"In October 1980 I travelled from England, where I had then been living for nearly twenty-five years in a county which was almost always under grey skies, to Vienna, hoping that a change of place would help me get over a particularly difficult period in my life" ("All'estero" V 33).
"In the second half of the 1960s I traveled repeatedly from England to Belgium, partly for study purposes, partly for other reasons which were never entirely clear to me" (A 3).

Sebaldian traveler, hotel rooms produce seasickness—the sense of being adrift—in their occupants. This "seasickness" works not just as a signal of his characters' extraterritoriality but also as a reflection of the queer space of the hotel room acting as "home."[268] In his temporary hotels and housing, Austerlitz feels adrift—in a hotel room he stays in, he finds himself feeling "like a man seasick," imagining all the "grand hotels ranged in a semicircle rising to the heights…their corner turrets and roof ridges emerging from the morning mist like oceangoing steamers from a dark sea" (212). Personal spaces are rarely stable for Austerlitz—he re-experiences his childhood dislocation in many of the personal spaces he occupies in the novel. Evoking his childhood emigration, his adult rooms metaphorically churn under his feet, making him imagine that he is in transit on the sea, occupying the extraterritorial space between countries as he literally did on the *kindertransport*.[269] Visiting Iver Grove, a historic home in the English countryside where interior rooms have been preserved from the passage of time by establishing "false walls" and "pushing large wardrobes in front of them," Austerlitz complains that the rooms causes him to feel "a sense of disjunction, of having no ground beneath my feet" (108, 109).

This sense of disjunction, also manifested through vertigo and seasickness, is a queer spatial experience.[270] The sensation of vertigo involves losing one's sense of direction because of disruption to the inner ear. Vertigo is a queer sensation because it disorients those who suffer from it, disabling them from "seeing straight." One section of *Vertigo* is titled "All'estero,"

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[268] See Hart and Lown-Hecht.

[269] See also Austerlitz's experience in the Ladies Waiting Room: "I stood in that empty space beneath a ceiling which seemed to flat at a vertiginous height, unable to move from the spot"—the room itself behaves oddly/disorienting: "beams of light followed curious trajectories which violated the laws of physics" and he imagines seeing "just for a split second…huge halls open up, with rows of pillars and colonnades" (135).

[270] Early work on navigation and vertigo advanced the theory that "[d]isorientation at sea was an experience shared by almost all who traveled" in sailing ships because "the orientation of the visual surroundings with respect to gravity can be dissociated" (Wade 148). Navigating at sea is more complicated than navigating on land, because of the shortage of landmarks in the ocean. The sameness of the ocean leads sailors to see false horizons, much like people traveling through the desert see mirages of water. See William Robert Martin, p. 284.

which means "abroad" or "overseas" in Italian. In it, the narrator arrives in Venice, where the traffic on the street makes him feel at sea: "Ceaselessly, in great surges, the waves roll in over the length and breadth of our cities, rising higher and higher" (63). When another character arrives in Venice by boat, he feels so seasick that he images that "waves were still breaking within him" (146). He remains queasy in his hotel but wants to "plunge into the city" like it is an ocean. As he wanders the city, he continues to feel adrift. Visiting a chapel, he thinks, "it seemed to me as if I were in a boat on a voyage, crossing vast waters" (179). Seasickness is part of the web of disorienting sensations that recur Sebald's novels, including dizziness, vertigo, general disorientation, confusion, or the feeling of being adrift.[271] In *The Rings of Saturn*, the narrator stays at an inn where he feels as if he is "in a cabin aboard a ship on the high seas, as if the whole building were rising on the well of a wave" (208).

In *The Emigrants*, one character rooms at a hotel whose halls and passageways seemed designed to confound guests: "it took me quite some time before I could find my way around the maze of dead-end corridors, emergency exits, doors to rooms, toilets and fire escapes, landings and staircases" (153). The space inside the hotel offers an alternative to the conventional routes, signage, or hallways that might make it easy for guests to navigate inside. Rather than showing clear and well-trodden pathways, the hotel presents a series of dead-ends, a maze, a labyrinth, circuitous routes leading nowhere or places the narrator does not expect to find. The narrator's

[271] For example, the narrator of *Vertigo* finds his sense of self merging with his surroundings to produce seasickness. In Verona, he visits a restaurant arranged like "a grotto festooned with fishing nets" and gives him the impression that he is "wholly surrounded by water" (77). This metaphor gives way to the narrator's more literal sense of being on an island. His sense of dissolving into the restaurant evokes Woolf's Bernard from *The Waves*, who also experiences his consciousness in relation to the rooms he occupies. As the narrator's subjectivity dissolves into the space he occupies, he begins to feel "a mounting sense of unease" and must "grip the table edge, as a seasick man might grip a ship's rail" (77). Absorbed wholly into the space of the restaurant, he tries to "focus on reality once more" (77). This scene demonstrates the liminal subjectivity of Sebald's narrator, whose sense of self is unstably related to the spaces he occupies, giving way especially when the scene that surrounds him also disorients him. Because the restaurant is decorated like a ship, it gives the narrator the impression of actual extraterritoriality—being outside of a nation altogether. In this context, his subjectivity begins to dissolve as he loses his sense of reality. The narrator's sense of isolation is amplified by the restaurant being thematically "at sea," and he feels himself "surrounded by water," adrift psychologically as a result of feeling adrift in the space of the restaurant.

navigation of the hotel is a metaphor for his navigation of territorial belonging as well; rather than being presented with a straight path, he finds a maze. The hotel's deliberately unconventional architecture echoes the narrator's approach to the city itself, which he wanders with a powerful "sense of aimlessness and futility…with no particular destination in mind" (156). And yet getting lost has its benefits. Rather than orient its guests with clear directions and conventional hallways, the hotel opens up new routes, new directions, out-of-the way spaces that its occupants can discover. The narrator's approach to navigating the hotel interrupts personal and architectural expectations for order. Whether the disorientation is the cause or the result of the hotel's deliberately misleading architecture, the space reiterates a challenge to its occupants to find a new way.

Hallways and Secret Passageways

From Austerlitz's hidden window to the concealed room in the Palace of Justice, secret spaces are central to the queer spaces in Sebald's work. In *The Emigrants*, a collection of four narratives about emigrants told from the perspective of a traveling narrator, concealed passageways are a queer space.[272] Although the novel's thematic concerns are oriented toward Jewish displacement as the result of World War II, the individual sections are occupied with seemingly unrelated anecdotes: about glaciers, cemeteries, gambling, maps, and Vladimir Nabokov. The different sections are connected only very loosely through the recurring image of a "butterfly man" and by the characters' anxiety about moving. The novel is fascinated not only with the ostensible immigrants, but also with other displaced persons. In the first section of *The Emigrants*, the narrator and his partner, Clara, search for a rented room near Norwich, where the

[272] There is some debate about whether there is merely one narrator of *The Emigrants*, or whether each section has a different narrator.

narrator has accepted a teaching position. They arrange to stay in the east wing of the house belonging to Dr. Henry Selwyn, an immigrant from Lithuania, and his wife. The east wing offers the narrator and Clara a clear view down the corridor, where they can see "a female personage of indeterminable age" at the sink: a servant, Elaine, who looks like an "inmate of asylums" (9). Elaine is frequently the only other person in the house, described as an unmarried, mute servant, who seems both friendless and purposeless. Although she is a fixture in the kitchen, she also seems aimless and adrift, a quality that aligns her with Sebald's other emigrants. "What work Elaine was doing in the kitchen," the narrator wondered, "remained a mystery to Clara and myself…no meal, with one single exception, was ever cooked there" (9).

Although she is mentioned only briefly, the figure of Elaine brings to life a series of Sebaldian paradoxes: she is tied to a home but never belongs; seems to occupy it as "asylum" in the resonances of both mental illness and political protection; is never at rest, but seems to accomplish little. As a servant, Elaine is part of a historical population who would "run the house" while remaining on the margins of it. Even in Sebald's contemporary re-telling of the servant-landlord relationship, Elaine remains on the margins. Elaine seems to have no family, except for a girl who visits on Sundays and holidays and "walk[s] beside [Elaine], one trusting hand in hers" (10). The child, perhaps Elaine's illegitimate daughter, both signifies family connection and disavows Elaine's relationship to heterosexual family bonds. The text evokes the long history of the English serving class as a marginalized and concealed labor force, both through Elaine's separation from her only (implied) family member and through her rooms in the house itself.[273] The door in the wall near the narrator's rooms disguises the entrance to the

[273] Elaine's relationship with the girl evokes a history of compelled migration for the English working class. Though this migration may have been *within* rather than *beyond* the nation, but it produces similarly migratory figures that must live separately from their families. Historically, the serving class often left their families behind at a young age, and depending on their employer, could have more limited prospects for marriage. Huggett, Frank E. *Life Below*

servants' corridors, where "hidden passageways" and "dark stairwells" are concealed behind the walls of the main rooms:

> Across the corridor, about a foot above the stone floor, there was a door in the wall. Through it, one entered a dark stairwell; and on every floor hidden passageways branches off, running behind walls in such a way that the servants, ceaselessly hurrying to and fro laden with coal scuttles, baskets of firewood, cleaning materials, bed linen and tea trays, never had to cross the paths of their betters. Often I tried to imagine what went on inside the heads of people who led their lives knowing that, behind the walls of the rooms they were in, the shadows of the servants were perpetually flitting past. I fancied they ought to have been afraid of those ghostly creatures" (9-10).

The architecture of these concealed passageways intensifies the effect of seeing the servants not as human beings, but as "ghostly creatures," whose movements are impish or not quite human: they "flit" and "hurry to and fro." Mark Giroud's study of the architecture of the country house explains that the homes were designed to ensure that servants remained invisible: "An intricate system of backstairs and back corridors ensured that housemaids could get up to the bedrooms, dinner to the dining rooms…with the least possible chance of meeting the family on the way" (285). Sebald's narrator notices spaces that offer an alternative to the public, family spaces of the house. These concealed and hidden pathways represent an alternative to public routes through the house; in doing so, they also interrupt the narrative of the English manor house that both relies on and elides the serving class.[274]

Stairs. Occasionally, a sense of propriety also prevents the serving class from pursuing families, as Kazuo Ishiguro's representation of the butler, Stevens, suggests. See also Lucy Delap, 41-58, and Pamela Horn.

[274] While Dr. Selwyn own the house and grounds, he does not represent the English aristocracy. On the one hand, his name suggests that he is part of the ruling class—"Selwyn" is an Anglo-Saxon name meaning "manor friend" or

Sebald's Labyrinth

Although the labyrinth is not a home per se (except in the labyrinthine hotel in *The Emigrants*), the space inside the labyrinth is useful for understanding Sebald's queer approach to navigation both in and outside of home. In *Austerlitz*, Austerlitz's travel habits resonate with the queer spaces he explores. Throughout the novel, his travels bring him to spaces that are not conventional, or "straight" and his routes are similarly incongruous. Repeatedly, Austerlitz pursues digressive or circuitous routes: he meanders, "circling…roundabout" (39), "wander[s] aimlessly" (59), "drift[s]" (115), undertakes "nocturnal wanderings through London" (126), "walk[s] through the labyrinth of alleyways, thoroughfares, and courtyards" (150), "trac[es] the convoluted paths" (263), and "wander[s] around a maze of long passages, vaults, galleries and grottoes" (269). During these "wanderings," he often seeks out other kinds of queer or concealed spaces, especially those overlooked or on the margins: an "entrance to the underworld" (127-28); an "irregular opening in the wall" (149); a "deserted station…[and] the labyrinthine underpasses" (291), to get to "the most remote areas of London…outlying parts of the metropolis which I would never otherwise have seen" (126). The spaces that Austerlitz explores are outside of the field of vision of most Londoners. One could also argue that Austerlitz himself is outside the field of vision, elusive on the margins of the state and fond of deviating from literal and figurative constructed paths, roads, and maps. Austerlitz's alternative routes and interest in

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"friend in the house." But Selwyn is also an outsider in England, an immigrant from Lithuania who confesses that he is "beset with homesickness more and more" in his old age (18). In the story, Selwyn is often talking long and wandering walks on the grounds. As a child, Selwyn reports, his family emigrated from Lithuania and he grew up in a basement apartment in Whitechapel, homesick for "the empty rooms of our house" in Lithuania (19). Selwyn, then, is not so far from Elaine or from the narrator of "The Emigrants," in living at the margins. His childhood basement apartment is suggestive of the living space of servants, who also often lived in basements and attics, rooms at the margins of houses. See also Giroud, 284.

hidden spaces signal deviations from expected routes, like thoroughfares and city streets, but they also evoke his ideological deviation from the "routes" of nationhood and family.

No matter how carefully he follows the map or what kind of panoramic view he sees, the Sebaldian traveler is reminded of what doesn't fit on the map—in struggling to recognize himself, he also struggles to recognize the cities around him. In *Vertigo*, the narrator of "All'estero" seems to follow a labyrinth rather than a map as he finds his way through Milan. His map, featuring a large labyrinth on the front, implicitly counteracts the aim of the map. While the map is intended to establish one's bearings, the labyrinth runs counter to this aim; it means to disorient. David Darby reads the labyrinth as "a deferral of ending," in which the walker is perpetually lost (271). And indeed, the narrator of this section finds himself lost, even when he seems to know where he is. As he explores Milan, the narrator accounts for his precise location: "I walked down the Via Moscova, past San Angelo, through the Giardinia Pubblici…" and finds himself at the Piazza della Scala, where he enters a cathedral. Once inside, the sense of order he'd had on the streets vanishes and "all of a sudden [I] no longer had any knowledge of where I was…I was unable even to determine whether I was in the land of the living or already in another place" (115). As he climbs to the top of the cathedral's tower to orient himself from above, he feels "beset by recurring fits of vertigo [as I] gazed out upon the dusky, hazy panorama of a city now altogether alien to me" (115). Some have read this moment as evidence of the dissolution of the narrator's subjectivity or his loss of memory, but it is also a signal of the intertwined psychological and geographic disorientation that the narrator feels.[275] As with the map, the trip to the top of the cathedral is intended to orient the narrator in Milan. And yet his feeling of disorientation persists even at the top of the cathedral, where he finds the city "dusky, hazy" and "altogether alien." Even from this perspective, he finds the city impenetrable,

[275] See J.J. Long, 85.

unknowable. The narrator is not simply lost in Milan, he is lost because he is a perpetual traveler, a migrant. This homelessness is replicated in his encounters with other cities, even cities for which he has a map and a panoramic view. His disorientation is thus both local—in the sense that it occurs specific places, like a cathedral in Milan—but also global—in the sense that he feels he belongs nowhere. That evening, back in his hotel, the narrator concedes: "Poor travellers, I thought, seeing myself among them: always somewhere else" (111). A perpetual traveler, the narrator feels "always somewhere else," never settled where he is and never able to feel entirely at home.

Conclusions: Queer Nations

Unlike many of the other texts I examine, Sebald's work rarely presents us with a nostalgic vision of home. Instead, his oeuvre seems to ask: how do you represent home if you do not have a home? His characters have disjunctive relationships to both the rooms they inhabit (studios, hotels, bedrooms) and to the larger territorial homes from which they feel estranged. In both their form and their subject matter, Sebald's texts grapple with the queer home as a response to his characters' irreconcilable desire for both belonging and escape. These incompatible desires often take shape through exploration of symbolic national spaces. In *Austerlitz*, these symbolic national spaces are regularly haunted by the ghosts of history. They contain reminders of concealed, marginalized, or hidden lives so often elided by institutional architecture and Austerlitz explores queer rooms within symbolic national spaces throughout Europe. In Brussels's Palace of Justice, Austerlitz explores the renovated corridors and rooms where German soldiers once burned sections of the buildings. In Iver Grove, one of the first country houses the British government bought to preserve it from being damaged by World War

II, Austerlitz finds the "silent horror" of a perfectly preserved room where time seems not to have passed.[276] In France's Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, a space that German troops seized and destroyed over two million books during the war and that once served as a warehouse for Jews' belongings, Austerlitz enters on an esplanade he likens to the deck of a German ocean liner at sea and spends time in his "place of banishment" in the reading room, where he feels at sea, imagining that the library is instead "the deck of the Berengaria or one of the other oceangoing giants" (277).[277] In these homes and monuments, especially symbolic national spaces, Austerlitz rarely takes the conventional route. Austerlitz's travels emphasize alternative entrances, out of the way rooms, and even the disjunctive feeling of being "at sea" in the national library. These discoveries are in part a reflection of his interior landscape—because Austerlitz feels lost on the inside, he gets lost in the outside. However, they are also a signal of an exterior landscape in which "home" is an increasingly elusive, increasingly unsettled place. *Austerlitz* and Sebald's other novels, queer spaces are everywhere, and everywhere a reminder of the people and places that are not easily categorized by reproductive, familial, or national relations. His work suggests that queer spaces and queer approaches to space offer a more realistic version of globalized, post-war Europe than do orderly maps, well-maintained family homes, or even monolithic national buildings. However, Sebald's queer aesthetics are less a political rebuke than

[276] Online collection of digitized editions of Commons and Lords Hansard, the Official Report of debates in Parliament. This was part of a project led by the Commons and Lords libraries. http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1961/jan/24/iver-grove-buckinghamshire
At Iver Grove, the familiar space of the country house produces a "queer effect" because it is "out of place" in the surrounding landscape of destruction. As Ahmed argues, spaces that seem out of place produce a "queer effect" because they make the familiar feel strange. For Ahmed, it's almost as if the *unheimlich* becomes queer along as well as uncanny.

[277] The Berengaria was an ocean liner in use during World War I under the name *SS Imperator*. Officials in the Germany Imperial Navy decided to keep the ship in its harbor in 1914 in order to protect it; the US Navy discovered it, rusting in the mud, there in 1919. The ship was rechristened the *Berengaria* and used to transport troops back to America. (Partnoy 236n4). Gregory-Guider has also remarked that places like the Bibliotechque like the narrators, in that "they tend to roam, to wander" (422).

they are a confrontation with the realities of modernity. The queer spaces in his novel are a record of where outliers live, the rooms occupied by travelers, orphans, and immigrants.

While *Austerlitz* does not call for the political dissolution of the nation, neither does it embrace national boundaries as necessarily productive or useful. Instead, for Sebald, the nation seems a wholly inadequate form to represent the complexities, variances, and difference of the twentieth-century citizen. His characters can't return home because home—as a psychological space, a territorial space, and a physical location—is transformed. His texts thus call for a revision to the category of the nation, one that is more expansive, more inclusive to difference, one that offers space for the marginalized, liminal, queer, or disoriented subjects of the later twentieth century. This is a queer vision of the nation, one brought about by an interest in queer spaces, people and places that don't quite fit, and itineraries that travel off the established lines.

CONCLUSION: GOING HOME: FICTIONS OF BELONGING

> The orientation of the house is fundamentally defined from the outside, from the point of view of men and, if one may say so, by men and for men, as the place from which men come out. The house is an empire within an empire, but one which always remains subordinate because, even though it presents all the properties and all the relations which define the archetypal world, it remains a reversed world, an inverted reflection.
> -- Pierre Bourdieu, "The Berber House"

> I've often walked along the streets where people live all in a row, and one house is exactly like another house, and wondered what on earth the women were doing inside […]There it was going on in the background, for all those thousands of years, this curious silent unrepresented life.
> -- Virginia Woolf, *The Voyage Out*

In Virginia Woolf's 1915 novel, *The Voyage Out*, a young man reflects on how little he knows about the "curious silent unrepresented life" inside other people's houses. Nearly one hundred years later, life inside is no longer "unrepresented," but in many ways, it is still underrepresented. Despite the overt fascination with home in popular culture throughout the twentieth century, the home is often regarded as secondary to changes happening outside of it.[278] In part, this is because the home is still considered the realm of the feminine, despite the work of critics who have persuasively shown that the home is an archive of history, a space where gender and sexuality are materialized, or a site of violence, alienation and oppression.[279] Both Bourdieu and Woolf's young man, Terence Hewet, associate the home as a feminine space (Hewet "wondered what on earth the women were doing inside") in contrast with the "masculine" exterior world (Bourdieu claims the "outside" represents "the point of view of men"). In many ways, Bourdieu's observation about the Berber house continues to resonate: he describes the

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[278] See Edwardian popular texts like *The British Home of Today*, *The English House*, *The Modern English House*, *The English Home*, *The Growth of the English House*, and *English House Design: A Review*, all published between 1904-1911 (Hegglund, 399). In the middle of the century, in contemporary culture, see HGTV's vast empire, the contemporary mortgage housing crisis, or texts like *Ideal Homes* or *Home Truths*.

[279] See Antoinette Burton, Sara Ahmed, and Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling.

home as "an inverted reflection," "subordinate" to the outside world. In Bourdieu's reading, the external world transfers its properties onto the house, which is a passive receptacle.

The critical interest in space has mushroomed in the last 25 years, and this expansion seems to coincide with a historical moment in which the globe feels "flattened," thanks to the convergence of technology, globalization, and industry.[280] Concomitant with technological change comes new patterns of migration within both the U.K. and the U.S.[281] Immigration laws are in flux across the world.[282] The combination of increased migration (both intra- and international) with the "flattening" of an interconnected globe means that home, as both a concept and a place to rest one's head at night, is more in flux than ever. And yet despite—or perhaps, because of—these changes, the idea of home as a stable, secure location persists in literary and popular discourse.[283] Stability at home is a myth. And yet, spatial stability is an increasingly appealing myth as the space of home itself becomes unsettled.[284] Throughout this dissertation, I have tried to show that while the space of the home is clearly influenced by external events like war, patterns of migration, colonial expansion, and technological change, the home is not merely a subordinate reflection of the (implicitly dominant) exterior world. One way I have tried to demonstrate this is by reading experimental narrative forms as a response to the changing space of the home. Literary critics have proposed many ways to explain the development of modernism's experimental narrative styles: as a response to cosmopolitanism, to

[280] See for instance Thomas Friedman's *The World is Flat*.
[281] People are moving more than ever. See U.S. Census, 2012; see also U.K Census data spanning 2001-2011 (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21511904). I cite U.S. census data along with U.K. census data because much of the critical interest in space and literature comes from U.S. scholars, as well.
[282] See Randall Hansen on the U.K., Mary Giovagnoli on the U.S. See also Connor, Phillip, D'Vera Cohn, and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera.
[283] See the growth of the New Domesticity movement, for instance.
[284] See, for instance, the *Daily Mail*'s Ideal Home Exhibition or HGTV *Dream Home* program, both of which rely on an idealized fiction about home as a space and an idea.

war, to empire, to migration, or to the development of psychiatry.[285] Rather than simply argue that experimental forms are a direct response to changes within the home, I see the home as a versatile, sometimes slippery, material and metaphorical point of intersection between historical developments, national upheaval, and personal experience. As a spatial imaginary, the home amalgamates many broader historical changes that influence narrative style. Yet the home is not just a passive receptacle for exterior change, as Bourdieu describes the Berber house; the home is an active site of national conflict and occasionally the source of military, imperial, or political power. If Bourdieu's claim is correct, and the "house is an empire within an empire," then both domestic home and the national home are in flux, even as others might project wholeness onto these empires. Experimental forms, like Woolf's web of narration, Farrell's interpolation of news reports, Lessing's convoluted use of genre, and Sebald's queer styling, attempt to make sense of the contradictions of interior life. The home is ever changing, and yet it retains the vestigial desire for security, stability, and wholeness. To varying degrees, all the novels I examine show how form follows from material life. Literary style is a way of making sense of the tension between home as a space of security and home as the site of historical change and conflict.

As a final illustrative case, I want to examine briefly Kazuo Ishiguro's 1989 novel, *The Remains of the Day*. Born in Japan and raised primarily in England, Ishiguro writes novels inspired by both countries. Though he has been lauded as one of the most important British writers of the contemporary period, Ishiguro identifies as neither wholly British nor wholly Japanese.[286] His orientation toward Britishness informs his fiction's treatment of national belonging and questions of "home." In *The Remains of the Day*, the protagonist relies on the idea that home is stable, even as this idea is repeatedly exposed as a fiction. The novel describes the

[285] See Rebecca Walkowitz, Karen Levenback, Kurt Koenisberger, Gaurav Majumdar, Kylie Valentine.
[286] *The Times* listed Ishiguro as among the 50 best British writers since 1945. See Graham Swift's interview with Ishiguro about his heritage.

history of Darlington Hall, an English country house, through World War II and into the contemporary moment. This history is narrated by the increasingly unreliable perspective of an aging butler, Stevens, who reflects back over his career and the war. Both his particular home—an English country manor—and his broader affiliation to a national home—England—are thrown into disarray by World War II. Overtly, Stevens looks back to World War II as a time when the house was still run like a "proper English country home" under the leadership of Lord Darlington, whom Stevens believes to be a "great gentleman." Obsessed with the idea of dignity and greatness, Stevens effaces himself and his needs to better serve the "great gentleman" he believes Lord Darlington to be. The latent narrative, which Stevens inadvertently reveals, is that the house was never a "proper English country home." Instead, we come to understand that Lord Darlington was a Nazi sympathizer whose bad politics lead to his social and ethical collapse and ultimately, to the collapse of the house. Stevens's insistence on upholding the myth of Darlington's greatness works as a proxy for his insistence on the greatness of the Englishness countryside, a fiction that is embodied by the character of Mr. Farraday, an American investor who buys Darlington Hall in the 1980's and insists to Stevens, "this *is* a genuine grand old English house, isn't it? That's what I paid for. And you're a genuine old-fashioned English butler, not just some waiter pretending to be one. You're the real thing, aren't you?" (124). Mr. Farraday's imagined conception of Englishness, embodied by the house, is in fact as shallow as Stevens's own conception of "home," both in the form of Darlington Hall and of England at large.

Despite Stevens's insistence on the mythic past of the house and of Englishness, home was never stable; it was always a fiction. And yet, it is a fiction upon which Stevens and the other inhabitants of Darlington Hall rely, even as they repeatedly reveal its instabilities.

Although Stevens has hardly seen England outside of Darlington Hall, he persuades himself that his life in Darlington Hall offers him a greater vantage point on the country: "although we did not see a great deal of the country in the sense of touring the countryside and visiting picturesque sites, did actually 'see' more of England than most, placed as we were in houses, where the greatest ladies and gentlemen of the land gathered" (4). Stevens tells himself that the house is the center of England, but Darlington Hall changes enormously throughout the novel—staff come and go, portions of the house are portioned off, and Lord Darlington himself is socially banished. Many of Stevens' fictions revolve around his own importance to Darlington Hall and thus to English culture at large. During the war, Stevens describes the butler's pantry as like a military headquarters: "the heart of the house's operations, not unlike a general's headquarters during a battle" (165).[287] Stevens claims that the house is the center of the political maelstrom of World War II, arguing that debates are conducted, and crucial decisions arrived at, in the privacy and calm of the great houses of this country: "England is "a wheel, revolving with these great houses at the hub" (165). Such a claim both bolsters the importance of both Darlington Hall and Stevens's position within it. And yet, Stevens repeatedly demurs (at least overtly) from engaging in politics, claiming that his role is "to provide good service" and "not to meddle in the great affairs of the nation" (199). When Lord Darlington's guests publically humiliate Stevens by quizzing him on political questions, it exposes Stevens's fantasy about himself as crucial to the political operation of England, even as it underscores how Lord Darlington is not as restrained or generous as Stevens imagines him up to be. These slippages are central to the text's argument about Englishness and its relationship to the country house: both are narratives whose stability depends on a series of often-contradictory fictions.

[287] He also describes his preparation as: "I thus set about preparing for the days ahead as, I imagine, a general might prepare for a battle: I devised with utmost care a special staff plan anticipating all sorts of eventualities" (77)

The text's slippery narration thus functions as a point of resistance to these fictions of stability. Stevens's unreliable narration inadvertently exposes the class tensions that he is determined to keep repressed, as well as his anxiety about Lord Darlington's ethics during the war. In attempting to maintain an impossible fiction, Stevens denies the "draughts" in both the house and his own narration. His unreliable narration thus becomes an argument against these mythic conceptions of the nation and the fantasies of Englishness that both Stevens and Mr. Farraday project onto the house. Stevens speaks about the house, but he also speaks *for* the house. For Stevens, both Darlington Hall and Englishness are defined by the quality of "dignity," which he strives to embody in his role as butler. And yet it is precisely Stevens' striving for "dignity" that exposes the draftiness of his conceptions of Darlington Hall and Englishness. As much as Stevens tries to keep the reader in the public spaces of Darlington Hall and his own memory, we are repeatedly drawn into the basement of both the house and Stevens's memories, where we learn about his father's death, his own questionable ethical behavior with a Jewish member of the staff, and his failed romance with the housekeeper. It is precisely Stevens's striving for wholeness that lays bare the fictionality of his desire for home to remain a stable place.

In Ishiguro's novel, as well fiction by Woolf, Bowen, Farrell, Rhys, Selvon, and Lessing, the home is not as a stable site of reproduction, family, and national rootedness, but a drafty space that reflects the draftiness of the ideology of the national "home." Ishiguro's novel reveals that Englishness, especially as it is embodied through a particular interior space, was always a fiction despite Stevens's desire to locate stability there. Both Stevens and Mr. Farraday look back nostalgically to a time when Darlington Hall might have represented a mythic Englishness, but the text continues to reveal that this memory is itself a fantasy. Despite the immense changes to

the physical space of the home in the twentieth century, the house continues to be a touchstone for the impossible desire for stability in the face of historical change.

To conclude, I want to consider how this desire for stability at "home" extends into canonical choices that shape pedagogy and periodization within the field of literary studies. The divisions between national literatures and periods have come under increasing scrutiny in the last decade, with numerous critical arguments presenting the limitations of periodization.[288] Despite such criticisms, the discipline of literary studies continues to divide literature into distinct periods, national affiliations, and styles, even when the literature cuts across these boundaries. The limits of periodization and national affiliation are especially apparent in the twentieth century, where ease of travel, colonization, and globalization make these boundaries indefinite. In some ways, Ishiguro is a hallmark of these changes to the canon. Like the other writers this dissertation has examined, Ishiguro occupies an "oblique" orientation toward the narrow categories that had previously defined home, belonging, and citizenship.[289] His relationship to the canon is an example of Susan Stanford Friedman's argument that periodization around modernism "contains an unacknowledged spatial politics that suppresses the global dimensions of modernism through time" (439). Seeing modernism as Friedman does, as a matter of before and after "rupture," makes more room for novels like Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* or Farrell's *Troubles* within this new "polycentric modernity" (435). And yet, an argument like

[288] See, for example, Susan Stanford Friedman, David Damrosch, or Pascale Casanova. See also Randall Stevenson. See also Rebecca Walkowitz's argument that "new conceptions of national culture and international belonging require new social attitudes" (14).

[289] Woolf was, for many years, excluded from the modernist canon for being a woman (See Hugh Kenner). Late to conventional definitions of modernism and too early for postmodernism, both Bowen and Farrell's novels are liminal in relation to literary periods as well as national literatures (See Dawn Potter on Bowen; Farrell is excluded from most major anthologies of both British and Irish writing). Rhys, Selvon, and Lessing are often read narrowly as examples of colonial fiction or black British writing rather than stylistic innovators in their own right (See the majority of criticism on Rhys that addresses *Wide Sargasso Sea* and her colonial politics; Selvon is read primarily in the context of Black British writing; see Susan Watkins on Lessing and her relationship to questions about home and identity). Sebald is, like Ishiguro, somewhat of an enigma in terms of the relationship between his textual subjects and his national affiliation.

Friedman's risks reading all experimental literature as modernism. By reading "spatially" across periods and across nations, my project disrupts the national and temporal "homes" that literary periodization has historically inhabited. And yet, by challenging these architecture of these spaces, I also hope to have also created room for new connections, new ways of seeing national space, and new means for reading belonging and narrative form in the twentieth century.

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